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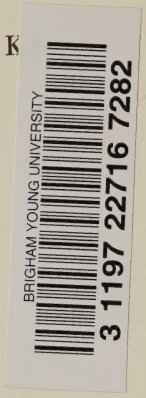

Murder and its Motives

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MURDER

&

ITS MOTIVES

by

F. Tennyson Jesse

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TO

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

BEST OF FRIENDS AND PUBLISHERS

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MURDER
&
ITS MOTIVES

The Classification of Motives

It has been observed, with some truth, that everyone loves a good murder. The class of persons to whom the very word does not give a certain not unpleasing thrill is so small that it may be ruled out for the purposes of discussion, and the rest of the world may be divided into two classes—that in which people frankly admit a vivid interest in murder as the most curious of the phenomena of human nature, and that in which are those who, while secretly thrilled, disclaim any such interest and condemn it as "morbid." To the true student of the ways of humanity nothing is morbid, as long as due balance and proportion be kept in the studying of it, and anyone who eliminates as an object of interest the most strange of all the phenomena of social life, is ruling out his chance of developing a comprehensive view of that life.

Murder is the most curious of all the phenomena, because it is the one which shows the most distorted point of view in the perpetrator. There are many crimes which can be said to be worth while, in which the gamble is not out of all proportion, just as there are many vices in which the

devotee is at least repaid with a pleasure which he can find commensurate to the risks. But even apart from the fact that in murder a man is staking all he himself has to throw, he generally stakes it for a ridiculously small reward. It could probably be said with truth that there are no known murders (apart from murder on such a scale that it can be called war) in which the objective is not ludicrously paltry compared with the risk run. It is one of the perpetual amazements of the student to find how wildly childish is the sense of proportion of the criminal—and this even when one considers that it is a crime in which the stake to be gained needs to be of the highest to make the risk worth while. Yet, for murder, the stake is generally found to be lower than it would be in any other crime. Few swindlers would embezzle such small sums as many men have committed murder to obtain.

This in itself may seem to argue a lack of intelligence in the criminal, which ought to place him in the category of those who cannot help their own actions, in short, that the murderer is, *ipso facto*, insane, and should be treated as such. But there is a gap, and a very distinct one, though its edges can be uncertain, between the man who is the blind slave of the distortions of his mind and brain, and he who deliberately makes use of those distortions. A rather interesting case in point is that of George Joseph Smith, of what were known as " The Brides in the Bath " murders. There were many who argued

that Smith was a man who took an overpowering pleasure in drowning women in their baths, and these people pointed to the indubitable fact that he had from boyhood up been of bad character. He had always stolen and lied and had been a reformatory boy. Nevertheless, as the trial unfolded, it was impossible to sustain this view. Smith had only too plainly known what he was about. In each case the murder had been carefully led up to, artfully arranged, and skilfully accomplished, for the sake of money. He didn't force his way into any bathroom and drown any woman for fun. He went through the form of marriage with a woman, either insured her or induced her to leave him all her money, and then, and not till then, he prepared the bath and drowned her. It was his *système*, as the gentleman at Monte Carlo said when his friends remonstrated with him for placing equal money on red and black every time. Only Smith's *système* was the more lucrative. There was something extraordinarily genuine in his rage at being found guilty. One received the impression that, had he not lived in this world of fools, he would have admitted to drowning the women—his private point of view being that he was justified. He needed the money. And that is an example of the curious lack of proportion in a murderer's mind. You will never find a true murderer—that is, one who kills not for rage in the heat of the moment, which is another thing altogether—but a man who deliberately kills—who is not a colossal egoist.

Most criminals are great egoists and inordinately vain, but these two qualities are found in excess in murderers. Vanity is the hallmark of criminals, the great quality they all have in common, as any student of their words, either spoken or written, soon discovers. Yet all this is not to say that the criminal is not responsible in the legal sense. The most interesting point, psychologically, about Smith, was one which could not be taken up much at his trial, as it was not the object of the prosecution to suggest insanity, neither was it the system of the defence. Smith had always warned Miss Pegler, the woman to whom he always returned and for whom he seems to have had a genuine affection, never to take a big bath. "They were dangerous for women," he said. Now this points to one thing —that he had a mania for drowning women in baths, and that he did not trust himself if even Miss Pegler put the temptation in his way. But he had the wit deliberately to turn his mania to account, to make it his means of income. This is one of the most curious instances known of a criminal deliberately recognising his own mania —not that, of course, he saw it as a mania, probably rather as a talent—and quite sanely and responsibly turning it to account.

George Joseph Smith, like Thomas Neill Cream, goes really into the class now known as moral imbeciles, although the stigmata were perhaps more clearly marked in Cream's case.

That Cream was sane, in so much as he recognised that he was committing an unsocial act

which brought him into jeopardy, there is no doubt ; but nowadays he would be classed as a moral imbecile, which is not the same thing as an imbecile with no moral sense. A moral imbecile is one who may have quite a good mental outfit, as, indeed, Cream must have had to pass his examinations and to take his degrees. It is on the moral side that men such as this are imbecile. In the Mental Deficiency Act of 1913 persons of this class are defined as : " Persons who from an early age display some permanent mental defect, coupled with strong vicious and criminal propensities, on which punishment has had little or no deterrent effect." Unfortunately, records of Cream's boyhood are sketchy, but if everything were known about him, it would probably be found that he exhibited from his earliest years that entire ruthlessness, where his own desires were in question, which characterises this type of human being. Chapman, the poisoner—whose case is rather analogous in that, although he poisoned some women to get rid of them, he yet poisoned others simply for the fun of the thing, so to speak—had been notorious as a boy for his practice of torturing animals.

Neill Cream displayed the two unvarying symptoms of the moral imbecile. He was lacking in moral sense and almost as completely lacking in what Dr. Mercier has called " Wisdom "— " that intellectual quality that guides and governs the higher and more comprehensive phases of conduct, that regulates the main business of life, an adaptation to circumstances that teaches us

how to act so that in the long run and on balance our lives will be successful." In addition to being without these two important parts of a civilised man's make-up, Cream possessed definitely abnormal instincts, while under the laws of his time he could not possibly have been certified as lacking mentally.

Dr. Tredgold, in writing of this new definition of moral imbecility, says: "The 'mental defect' of the definition was intended to denote and does denote, a defect quite different to the ordinary unintelligence of the feeble-minded or imbecile. . . . The moral imbecile is by no means unintelligent in the ordinary sense; but he is decidedly lacking in moral sense and wisdom, and this, combined in some cases with the presence of abnormal instincts, is the essential characteristic of the class." And Dr. Mercier says, speaking of the moral imbecile: "However astute, clever, dexterous, intelligent his shifts and dodges and stratagems and tricks may be, he is always a failure in the long run. He may succeed in his immediate object. . . . His devious path soon leads him round into disaster; and usually the disaster lies so plain before him that we wonder how a man so superficially clever should be beneath the surface such a fool. . . . He takes the most careful measures against detection by one method, and lays himself open to certain and speedy detection by another method. . . . He has plenty of intelligence, but little or no wisdom. He is a clever fool."

Could there be a better description of William Palmer or Neill Cream or George Joseph Smith?

That there are degrees of murder is now generally admitted, but there are also differences in kind as well as in degree, the comprehension of which would be of help in the psychological classification of crime. Every murder falls into one of six classes; it may belong in a greater or less degree to perhaps two of those classes, as I have shown in the case of George Joseph Smith, but in one of the classes it comes logically to rest. Murder groups itself naturally into the following six divisions:

I. Murder for gain.
II. Murder from revenge.
III. Murder for elimination.
IV. Murder from jealousy.
V. Murder from lust of killing.
VI. Murder from conviction.

This is not classification by degree—it is classification by motive. With the exception perhaps of the first and sixth, there is wide scope for degree in each class.

It will probably be noticed that I do not include what is known as the *crime passionel*. That is because it is not in itself a primary division, and it is only sloppy thinking that would make it so. A *crime passionel* always comes under one of the above headings—generally under that of revenge or jealousy,

occasionally under that of elimination. Revenge, jealousy, or elimination of some person who is in the way of lovers, or who has come between a husband and wife, these are the three motives which lead to a *crime passionel*, although it can also be found, at least partially, in the fifth class. Let us take the first class on the list—the most largely filled—that of murders committed for gain. Here the disproportion I have mentioned shows with the greatest clearness. Apart from the fact that the risk would be considered by anyone of normal sense of proportion too vast for any gain, the actual gain for which the murder is generally committed is very small, often problematical. Yet this class is filled with a numberless crowd, from peasants like the abominable Dumollards, who killed servant girls for their clothes, to clever villains like Palmer, who poisoned friends and relatives right and left for their money.

In class IV., that of murders from jealousy, we may come on a subtler manifestation, and the range is wide—all the gamut between a *crime passionel* to the cold-blooded satisfying of jealousy, such as Mrs. Pearcey's, or the murder of one schoolfellow by another for jealousy of being passed in class. Class III., that containing what I have called the " murder of elimination," is probably the largest after that of No. I. Here again the range is wide—from the lovers who plot to remove an inconvenient spouse, as did Jeanne Weiss and her lover, Roques, at Ain Fezza, to the removal of an inconvenient lover or a black-

mailer. The case of a husband or wife who kills a rival comes under the heading of jealousy, since that would be the dominating motive—as the dominating motive behind the removal of someone who stands in the way of an inheritance comes under that of murder for gain. The dominating motive of a pure murder for elimination is to remove someone who is inconveniencing the potential murderer by his presence and conduct, as L'Angelier certainly inconvenienced Madeleine Smith. Indeed, the killing of a blackmailer is a pure murder for elimination ; and so is the killing of a householder who chances to disturb burglars at their work. A classic murder for elimination is that of Harriet Lane by Wainwright, whose mistress she had been. He cherished his respectability, and it became impossible to retain both that and Harriet, therefore he eliminated the woman.

The true murder for revenge is a more select class, though it may often impinge on the murder from jealousy, as when a deserted mistress kills her lover. Nevertheless, this class is capable of holding cases which come to the edge of nonculpability—killings which can be justified. It is in murders of this class that the so-called " Unwritten Law " is evoked so often.

In the murder from lust of killing we come to the most difficult to treat of in an article for lay consumption. The born killer is not a pretty subject—the *bête en rut* as M. Goron aptly calls him—as more often than not there are other and more unsavoury elements intermingled. Some-

times, as with the Brownriggs, who obtained apprentices for the economically unsound object of flogging them to death, sheer love of cruelty is deep at the root. One of the most famous crimes, which appears to have been more bloodlust than anything else, although an attempt at gain was present, is the Williamson series of murders in the Ratcliffe Highway, so matchlessly written of by De Quincey that it is impossible to touch on them again. There have been other human tigers than Williamson, who murdered as ruthlessly and in as large quantities, there was, for example, the famous Lacenaire, who " killed a man as he would drink a glass of wine," and Troppmann, who murdered the whole Kinck family. But Lacenaire was waging war against society, he was doing so to make what money he could before the loaded dice came down as he knew they inevitably would, against him ; and Troppmann, with a fiendish disproportion of outlook, murdered for gain. They were both absolutely callous, yet of neither was it suggested that he took a pleasure in the actual deed of killing, which is the mark of bloodlust. There have been born killers so in love with blood they would pay to go and watch cattle slaughtered. There have been terribly sad cases where a man, knowing of the tendency within himself, has begged to be protected from it.

Often, particularly in cases of murdered women and children, other instincts have been so commingled as to make such cases only fit for discussion in a pathological work. And, in such

cases, the actual killing may sometimes fall into the class of murder for elimination. In these cases the murder is committed to conceal the previous outrage, as was done by the degenerate Menesclou, who murdered his landlady's little girl of four after violating her, and then tried to dispose of the body by fire. In other cases the killing is part of the orgy and the criminal merely tries to get safely away afterwards. In yet others it is the killing itself which is the orgy. In whichever of these sub-divisions the case fall there will always be people who urge against the infliction of the death penalty on the ground that the murderer is insane, as indeed he may be presumed to be. The error in reasoning is in taking that as an invincible argument against the death penalty. A murderer is not hanged to do him any good, but because, erroneously or otherwise—which is another question altogether—it is considered to be for the good of the rest of the world that he should die. It is certainly a good thing that the power to do any more harm or propagate his degenerate species is put beyond him by some means or other, but the death penalty would also be a good thing if it really had a deterrent effect on the rest of the criminal world. There will always be opinions for and against, both coming from men worth listening to, but do not let us be deluded by statistics on the one side or the other, for in this matter they are even more misleading than in most others. Statistics, like Holy Writ, can be twisted to any ends. M. Goron, the famous Chef de la Surété, was an

impassioned opponent of the death penalty, and few men are better worth respect in dealing with matters criminal than he, whose mind was extraordinarily flexible and just. He maintained that the death penalty never yet deterred a single murderer, that mostly they are men with very little horror of death for themselves, and that anyway, each one hoped to cheat justice. The flaw in this line of argument is, of course, that it is impossible to know of the cases where the fear of the death penalty has acted as a deterrent —only the cases where it has failed to do so come to notice.

This is not really as great a digression as it may appear, for legalised murder—if it be a murder —comes under the sixth and last classification, that of murder from conviction. Into this class come, of course, such killings as Charlotte Corday's and the outrages of anarchists ; that is to say, genuine cases of the latter, such as that of Orsini, not like those of Ravachol and Abadie, who assumed a cloak of anarchy to glorify their sordid crimes.

The great difficulty that arises in considering whether it should be the criminal or the community who should receive the greater consideration is this—that the criminal and the community are not two separate factors but one and the same thing. Over the gate of every prison there might with truth be carved this paraphrase of some immortal words : " *There but for the grace of God go I.*"

For the great division in the criminal world is

between the congenital criminal and the occasional criminal. In the former are men such as Smith and Cream, but in the latter any one of us might some day find himself; it is merely a question where our particular breaking point happens to come. Therefore, if our form of punishment makes the criminal worse instead of helping him to become a better citizen, we are wronging ourselves as much as we are wronging him.

Nine times out of ten the victim of a murder is not particularly interesting, and the fuss about him is not because he was necessarily a valuable member of the community. Old Miss Barrow, whom Seddon murdered for gain was, as Dr. Dearden has pointed out, in his interesting paper on the subject, of considerably less value to the world than was Seddon. Seddon was hard-working, honest, tireless, kind to his family and a living example of thrift. Miss Barrow was such an unpleasant old lady that none of her relations or friends could put up with her. She was uncleanly in her habits and quarrelsome—in short, she was nothing but a parasite, and an extremely unpleasant parasite. Seddon was not tried and convicted because Miss Barrow's life had been a valuable one, *but because Miss Barrow might have been you or I*, and that is the reason why the magnificent processes of the law are gone through slowly and conscientiously in every murder case. It is ourselves that we are protecting, and just as the victim might be you or I, so might the criminal. The criminal and the community are one, in so much as if we treat the

criminal wrongfully we are treating our potential selves wrongfully as well ; and also because the man whom we turn out after several years of prison, hardened and depraved, becomes the community once again, and a very bad effect he has on it.

Death being the thing that all living creatures instinctively fear, it is from the danger of premature death that we strive to protect ourselves most vigorously, which is why murder is considered the chief of crimes and so, in a rough classification, it is, though there have been many murders that were less of an outrage than some lines of conduct persisted in by apparently worthy members of the community in their ordinary daily intercourse. A pious church-going man or woman can manage to inflict as much moral suffering in their immediate surroundings on helpless, fearful children, or paid companions, as many a murderer can inflict in the comparatively short space of time occupied by his crime.

There may come a day when the deliberate destruction of beauty or the spoiling of childhood will be classed as a crime under the criminal code ; but in the code as it stands at present murder heads the list of offences ; and murder differs so in degree that a careful scrutiny of motive as well as of circumstance should be held in every case.

There is, besides these six primary classifications, which, as I have shown, can often impinge upon each other, a class, not of murders, but of

murderers, whose crimes of necessity fall under some one of these headings, but yet whose motive is so pitiably faint and thin, that it can barely be said to exist. This class is that of the criminal mentally deficient, or aments, a different thing from the class of moral imbecile, but, like the latter, only adequately recognised and provided for (or against) in England since the Act of 1913. One of the great flaws of our educational system is that it leaves vicious children just when criminal tendencies begin to declare themselves. These are the children who murder for revenge because someone has passed some slight criticism on them, or for gain, because they see someone with a cake or sweet which they want, or because they want to be talked about and cut fine figures in the little world they know. To this class belong those youthful murderers whom Raymond Hesse considers the victims of unwise reading—the boys who, obsessed by Fenimore Cooper and similar authors, wish to emulate the daring feats of their heroes. In France in the year 1885, two weak-minded boys of seventeen killed a little girl whom they had known all their lives, with seventeen knife stabs, simply and solely because they had worked themselves up into thinking that they were romantic and tragic figures. They called themselves " Great Serpent " and " Agile Stag " in imitation of Red Indian braves, and they saw themselves perpetually as dread figures of vengeance stalking through the land. If it were within the scope of this book to include cases of

this type, a new sub-heading, that of vanity, to come under the title of lust of killing, would be necessary. Crimes of this sort are so purely pathological and, mercifully, so rare, that they do not come within normal and everyday classifications. The French doctor, Garnier, states: "Towards the age of sixteen there arrives a physiological moment when the young, particularly the male, become a culture bed for nervous intoxications and it is at this moment that epileptic disorders become converted into criminal impulses." Epileptics and alcoholics are in a class apart, they cannot be classified according to motive, their motives being altogether too slight to be worthy of consideration.

Dr. Tredgold, speaking of vicious and criminal aments, says: "In latter years such persons are guilty of the more serious crimes of incendiarism, train-wrecking, criminal assaults upon little girls and homicide, and although these may at times appear to be sudden and unpremeditated, they very often show evidence of previous deliberation and plan and sometimes of considerable cunning to escape detection. Their whole lives consist of an almost unbroken series of offences."

It is impossible to educate these aments beyond a certain point. They can be trained to a morality good enough for the conditions under which they are watched and guarded in their little community, but they cannot be made efficient citizens, as the ordinary criminal of circumstances or even of heredity, often can.

Their crimes, however, are of no particular interest to the student, because they are without form and void, and also because the perpetrators thereof are not responsible. And it is in the measure of the responsibility, in the exact adjustment of his mental attitude towards the world, that the interest of the criminal lies.

For they are interesting, let us frankly admit it, these extraordinary manifestations of the abnormal tendency to evil which distinguishes the congenital criminal; and also the terrible failure of the occasional criminal to act in accordance with the rules of society.

In the following articles I have shown a case, more or less typical of each division of murder as I have classified it. They are a sinister band of murderers whose cases we are going to discuss: bland and cold-blooded Palmer with his relentless pursuit of money; the two unscrupulous women, strong in crime, who killed their husbands in a quiet corner of Brittany; the resentful, morbid schoolgirl who found expression for all the grievances under which she laboured in the death of her little brother; Neill Cream, the doctor, who like a bogey-man stalked the streets of Lambeth; Mary Pearcey with her relentlessness and ferocity, so well hidden under her mild exterior. Even Orsini, the slave of an idea, was a grim figure enough when one thinks of the ruin he spread around him. But there is one point about nearly all these cases and about many and many others, which should be noted, and that is that there appears to be a race of human

beings who lay themselves out to be murdered—they are, to coin a word, born murderees.

Palmer's victims feared and distrusted him, not vaguely, but very definitely ; his mother-in-law declared it would be the end of her if she went to stay in his house ; she went, and it *was* the end of her. His wife—who obviously had grown to dread that anyone whom her husband treated should die—could not have felt that dread without a deadly suspicion of his guilt clutching at her heart, yet allowed him to minister to her, when she felt worse after every cup she took from his hands. That is perhaps more explicable ; she still apparently loved the man, or, at least, the memory of her love for him still lived in her. If she still cared for him it may well have been that she could not believe the hand of love could so turn against her ; if she only remembered past affection, she may have been so unhappy that she welcomed death even in such a guise. But Cook accused him to a friend of having deliberately tried to poison him and still he went on taking food from his hands.

Phœbe Hogg, only too aware that her husband was deceiving her with Mrs. Pearcey, and aware, too, at the back of her mind, if not at the front, that Mrs. Pearcey wished her ill ; yet went and delivered herself and her child up to the force of her rival's jealousy.

The husband of the woman Simon knew she was trying to kill him ; the husband of Aimée de Quérangel suspected as much.

The women whom Cream murdered were

always taking risks by the very nature of their profession, unthinkable risks, which is perhaps just why they did not allow themselves to think of them. . . . And yet, surely, even so, they would know enough of life to make them chary of swallowing medicine pressed on them by a strange man ?

What can possibly be the explanation of this curious mental attribute in the victims of murderers ? To the impartial onlooker, it almost suggests a hypnotised attitude of a bird before a snake ; partly, no doubt, the explanation lies in that instinct which forbids one to believe that anything terrible can happen to oneself or to anyone in one's immediate circle ; but that is not enough to explain the phenomenon entirely.

Perhaps, at some far future date, when the laws of attraction and repulsion are more fully understood than they are at present, it will be discovered that murderers and murderees send out wave-lengths that correspond as do the wave-lengths of wireless between certain stations. Meanwhile, this curious question must remain something of a mystery.

§ I

The Murder for Gain

WILLIAM PALMER

THE case of William Palmer presents one of the purest examples of murders for Gain. There have been other poisoners as ruthless and as keenly urged by the necessity for money as he, but there have been few in whom a trace of some strange secondary motive has not tinged them more or less with some quality which places their crime in one of the other classes I have mentioned besides the primary one of Gain.

It is true that some of the deaths of which Palmer is suspected belong to the class of murder for Elimination, that is, if it be true that he murdered several of his illegitimate children; but in the murder for which he was finally arraigned and those other murders for which, on exhumation of the bodies, a verdict was brought against him, his motive was simply the acquisition of money. Pritchard, another of the doctor poisoners, of whom Lamson, de la Pommerais, and Castaing go to make up an infamous band, modelled his crimes largely upon those of his greater forerunner Palmer, but there was in Pritchard a curious lack, or perhaps one should more correctly say, incoherence of motive, which makes his crimes

less academical as examples of the murder for Gain. The list of murders accredited to Palmer runs into some fourteen or fifteen, and it was for the last of these, the poisoning of his friend Cook, that he was finally brought to justice, but not before rumour had been busy with his name for a considerable time. It reflects great credit on the manner and personality of Palmer that, in spite of these rumours, he remained unmolested for so long. Partly, this was owing to the fact that in those days—the period of Palmer's operations was the eighteen fifties—rumour, although always endowed with a thousand tongues, had not the means of spreading so quickly or so far as nowadays. Rugeley, where Palmer lived, was then a small, quiet, dreamy little place, and Palmer came of a family which, though discredited enough for many of its practices in the minds of honest men, had yet so prospered financially through these practices that its position was a more or less solid one.

Murder is a fantastic thing that the average human being is accustomed to think of as something read about in the newspapers, not as something committed by a fellow human being whom he knows and meets daily. The instinct, which most of us possess, to disbelieve in the possibility of an action so violent that it seems to us fantastic, operated for long in the minds of Palmer's acquaintances, and saved him temporarily, even when those minds were conscious of an uneasy undercurrent of suspicion.

But the great factor to which Palmer owed his immunity was his own personality. This bland and smiling young man, with the frank, open face, the florid complexion and the chubby cheeks, was far from being to the eyes of anyone not versed in the byways of human psychology a sinister figure. His very youth, for Palmer was hardly thirty-one when he died, was in his favour. There were only two things which might have made an acute observer wary in his dealings with the cheerful doctor; one was, that his expression never changed but was always composed, controlled and bland, however sudden and disconcerting his reverses; and the other was that, though he encouraged his friends to drink and even plied them with wine until they became intoxicated, he hardly drank anything himself and always remained perfectly sober.

Palmer had what the French call a grievous heredity. His mother, when a girl, carried on a double intrigue with a man called Hodson, steward to the then Marquis of Anglesey, and a sawyer of the name of Palmer. She married Palmer, but the possibilities of profit in a connection between a land steward and a sawyer are obvious, and while she kept Hodson in play, her husband marked the Marquis of Anglesey's timber twice over—1, 1, 2, 2, and 3, 3, instead of 1, 2, and 3, thereby getting exactly double the allowance that he paid for. Hodson required payment both in money and kindness for his complacence, and no one was hurt except the

Marquis. Palmer, the sawyer, became a rich man, owning timber-yards and houses. He died suddenly, leaving behind him his widow, Sarah Palmer, seven children, and a large enough fortune for the latter to be able to receive about £7000 apiece, and a considerable remainder for his lamenting Sarah. This lady consoled herself, since she would lose her landed property if she re-married, with various liaisons with rather disreputable men a great deal younger than herself, and there can be little doubt that " the Yard," as William Palmer always referred to it, where his mother continued to live, was the scene of many curious comings and goings. William was the second son, his brother Walter, whose fate was so terribly entwined with his, being the fourth. The other children, with the exception of the eldest daughter, whose reputation was even worse than her mother's, seem to have done well and decently in the world.

There is an account in an old newspaper of Palmer's parental home which is not uninteresting, as showing a trait in the Palmer mentality which was responsible for many of William's difficulties. It was, as has been said by some wit of another style of architecture since, Queen Anne in front and Mary Ann at the back ; in other words, the house made a fine show with silk curtains, plate glass, white paint and clipped trees in front, and behind was a dreary medley of rotting timber, uncultivated flower beds, and mud, while dish cloths hung out upon a sagging line ; even the smart carriage that used to drive

round to the front door came out of a stable which seemed as though it would drop upon it with rottenness. Two churches stood sentinel by this house, as though they were sponsors for what went on beneath its roof, and in one of these was William Palmer baptized on 21st October, 1824.

From the beginning there was something about William which differentiated him from his brothers and sisters, and this something was that he was " good." He never played at rough games like the other boys, and was always in a good temper. It is true that his school-fellows often accused him of unpleasant tricks, such as getting from them under false pretences small sums of money which he never paid back ; and he indulged in secret in cruelties towards animals and insects, but to all appearances he was one of the best little boys who ever wore a plaid frock and nankeen trousers. Yet this paragon among boys was discharged from his first apprenticeship, which was with a wholesale chemist in Liverpool. Already, though still very young, he was reported to have seduced a girl, and soon his employers began to notice that money, which various customers insisted they had sent in to the firm, never came to hand. The thefts were eventually traced beyond a doubt to Palmer, and it was only his mother's intervention with his employers, and the fact that she paid up the considerable sums he had stolen, which prevented his being prosecuted. Palmer confessed when there was nothing more

to be gained by denials and, while still only seventeen, he was apprenticed to a surgeon, Tylecote, of Hayward. Here Palmer's games soon began again, both with women and with money, and Mr. Tylecote refused to have anything more to do with him; so Palmer passed on to the Stafford Infirmary, where he became a pupil. Here, however, the authorities took exception to his dispensing of the medicines and a rule was passed forbidding him to go into the dispensary.

The first death with which Palmer had an unpleasant connection took place while he was at Stafford. He betted with a friend that a man named Abley could drink off two tumblers of brandy. Abley did so and promptly went forth and died. Soon after, Palmer left Stafford and came to pursue his medical studies in London.

The life of a medical student in those days was a very riotous affair, and the immortal Tom Allen and Bob Sawyer appear to have been, if anything, understatements of their type. Yet, in the midst of so much that was riotous, Palmer still remained always perfectly sober, his only lack of control being in his relations with women, with whom it was impossible to trust him, whatever their station in life.

Palmer was living very luxuriously at this time, stinting himself in nothing except in the paying of his debts, and it has been calculated by his contemporaries at Bartholomew's that he must have spent quite £2000 while he was a student. His reputation for generosity, which he had even as a child, followed him here,

and there was no one kinder in getting subscriptions for poor patients, or more liberal to his friends than he. However, although his rooms were hung around with anatomical prints, and he bought every possible medical work of the time, he was backward in his studies and took no more trouble than was necessary to get him through his examination. He did get through it, however, and came back to Rugeley with the intention of settling down there. He was already by this time a confirmed gambler, and not at all averse when the suggestion was made to him of marrying a young woman with money.

Annie Brooks, or Thornton, came of nearly as grievous an heredity as Palmer. She was the illegitimate daughter of a Colonel Brooks who, like his four brothers, killed himself, and of a Mrs. Thornton, his housemaid, who was both unfaithful and a drunkard. Yet Annie appears to have been a charming if rather colourless girl; evidently possessed of a great tenacity of attachment, since she married Palmer in the face of a good deal of opposition, and stayed with him when suspicion must have begun to shake her mind with misery and fear.

Palmer seems to have been an ardent and assiduous lover. He was her "own William"; she was his "dearest little Annie" whose "sweet little form" he only longed to press in his arms. He married Annie Brooks when he had already embezzled money, consorted with the lowest kind of women and seduced many

girls ; but he had obtained his diploma, though by the skin of his teeth. His only apparent weakness was gambling ; he neither drank nor swore, and he added to his florid good looks great charm and amiability of manner. He settled down as a surgeon in his native town of Rugeley with Annie as his wife.

His house, which had a window either side of the front door and three above, stood opposite the Talbot Arms, an inn which he was to make notorious. He " kept his carriage," as the saying of the day had it, and for some time seemed to be a reformed character.

Palmer's married life falls into two phases. He started with the beginnings of a good practice, with a devoted wife of whom there seems no doubt he was fond, and with a certain amount of money, and for some time he appears to have been more or less contented to behave himself—though even during this period he was at his old games in secret, for not long after his marriage he had an illegitimate child by a Rugeley woman. He had this little girl brought to him that he might satisfy himself as to her health ; he saw her, sent her home again, and she promptly died, as already another illegitimate child of his in Hayward had done. He had equally bad luck with his legitimate children—only the eldest, Willy, lived to grow up, his four other children all dying in convulsions—three at the age of a fortnight and one at three weeks. The children's nurse refused indignantly to go back to Palmer's house, as she declared that the last child was

perfectly well until Palmer came upstairs to see it and sent her down to the kitchen for a few minutes. The baby died in Palmer's arms in violent convulsions. It is true that babies are subject to convulsions, but if Palmer were a child-lover, he certainly was very unfortunate in the rearing of his various families. If, on the other hand, he was exercised about the expense they would be to him, he seems to have had remarkably good luck in their prompt removal. Mrs. Palmer, poor woman, was very saddened by the loss of her babies, and with her love for her only living child there seems to have mingled a strain of fear ; if he were out of her sight she doubted for his safety.

All this time Palmer was an unremitting churchgoer and never failed to be in his place on Sundays—and even used to be observed taking notes of the sermon upon the margin of his Bible. " Faith has a heavenly influence," he wrote upon one of these occasions. The human heart is a mystery even to itself, and who shall say whether Palmer were so profoundly and coldly hypocritical that these private notes made in his Bible were all part of his relentless scheme, or whether in that distorted egoism of the true criminal he did not perhaps hope that by certain concessions of his mind to the Deity he might not keep his immortal accounts squared ? Whatever the reality of his religion, it failed to hold him in the straight and narrow way of a surgeon. He seems to have had an inherent laziness which made him crave to

obtain the largest sums of money with the least possible effort. But more than this, his one deep passion, his passion for horse-racing, refused to be stifled in him, and urged him on down the way which was to lead him to an early death. This young surgeon, who had at best only been comfortably off, now kept a large racing stable and bred racehorses, but he seems to have had bad financial judgment, and though many of his horses were good, he would often sell them for ridiculously low sums. He was not admitted a member of Tattersall's, having been a defaulter, and indeed, many of his doings in connection with racing were not above suspicion ; and it has been suggested that an early purchase of strychnine by him was for the doping of horses by himself and that friend of his, Cook, who was eventually to die by that very poison. " It was the riding that did it," was Palmer's famous remark when the verdict was brought in against him ; and it was the riding that had done it, all through his life—the riding of his own passions where they chose to lead him ; with, as an added danger to such a temperament, the cold and calculating mind which could arrange at whatever cost for the indulgence of those passions.

Occasionally Palmer had a run of luck, but more often than not fortune was against him. At one time he stood to win about £10,000 when he ran Nettle for the Oaks, but she bolted and threw her jockey. This sum, had he won it, would almost have put Palmer on his feet again, and what must his sensations have been when he

saw Nettle tearing riderless off the course! Yet he only remarked that it was rather a bore, and across his bland countenance there passed not a trace of what he must have been feeling.

Palmer was by now in great money difficulties, and he approached his mother-in-law, Mrs. Thornton, for assistance. She, however, though an eccentric old person who lived without any servants, saw no reason why she should lend him what he wanted; and his added request that she should come and make her home with him and her daughter she disliked still more. She eventually sent him a cheque for £20, but this generosity, which must have seemed to Palmer merely an added irritation, like a fly on a wound, only made him all the more eager to show his gratitude by taking his mother-in-law to live with him. Why the old lady went no one will ever know, for when, over-persuaded, she reluctantly took her way to his house, she uttered these words: "I know I shall not live a fortnight." She was right; the fortnight saw her buried from Palmer's house, and he became the possessor of nine houses.

The next person to pay a visit to the surgeon's comfortable home was a friend of his called Bladon. Palmer wrote to him promising him some sport and also promising to pay him back the sum of money which he had owed him for some time. Bladon was perfectly well, and carried with him more than £100 in notes and his betting book. In a week he was so ill that Palmer called in his old friend Dr. Bamford,

who figures very prominently in the story of Palmer's life later on. Dr. Bamford appears to have been a kindly, unsuspicious, doddering old gentleman of over eighty, who always took his young friend's word for what his patients were suffering from and prescribed whatever innocuous drug he was asked for. Mr. Bladon died soon after his wife, who had been sent for by another friend—not by Palmer—had arrived, and Palmer only allowed her to see her husband for a few moments and then hurried her out of the room.

Suspicion now began to touch the minds of one or two people with the tip of a passing wing-feather. Bladon's friends did not like either Bladon's death, his hasty burial, or the fact that only about £15 in money was found in his clothes and that his betting book was missing. Mrs. Bladon was fond of Mrs. Palmer, and though puzzled and unhappy, so horrified at the terrible suggestion which her late husband's friends breathed to her that she could not bring herself to believe it and thus add to poor Mrs. Palmer's worries. In fact, Mrs. Bladon wrote a very touching letter to Mr. Bostock, the friend who was agitating most in the matter, in which she said : " I felt and still feel extremely obliged to Mrs. Palmer for her kindness to me, which could not have been greater if I had been a relative of her own. Consider how shocking it would appear, without some more proof than mere surmises, to accuse anyone of a foul crime which your letter more than hints at. If your

mind is not easy, go over yourself and make inquiries, but pause ere you do anything to render Mrs. Palmer so uneasy as so dreadful a suspicion must make her."

Mrs. Bladon's sympathy for Mrs. Palmer was not without deep cause, for the unfortunate Annie was terribly upset when Bladon died beneath her roof, and was heard to exclaim: "My poor mother died here last year and now this man, what will people say?" People were, in fact, beginning to say what later they said with no uncertain voice, and yet Palmer still continued unimpeded on his course. An uncle of his, one of his mother's brothers, also died in suspicious circumstances, after Palmer had been to see him. Another uncle, who had no power to will away his property as long as his wife remained alive, was nearly made a widower, which would doubtless have been the prelude to his own death, by a couple of pills which William Palmer gave to the old lady. If it had not been that she disliked pills and threw them out of the window, the deaths amongst Palmer's immediate relations would certainly have been augmented, for the pills fell into the chicken run and the chickens who ate them were dead the next morning when Palmer came round to inquire whether his aunt-by-marriage did not feel the better for the medicine he had given her.

A young man called Bly, who was owed £800 by Palmer, and was taken seriously ill when being attended by his friend, died, and Palmer explained to his widow that it was really Bly who

owed him £800, but he did not press the matter, and added generously that he would never have mentioned it to her if she had not spoken to him on the subject herself. Unlucky in his friends, who seemed to expire so rapidly all around him, and his children, the youngest of whom died in 1854, Palmer was to be equally unlucky as regarded his wife. She, too, was to die only a few months later.

Palmer had—very naturally—insured his wife's life, for under the terms of her father's will, she only had a life interest in property he had left her, and after her death it reverted to his relations ; therefore, Palmer was quite justified in insuring his wife's life so that he would not be left stranded in the event of her death. But he insured it to a greater extent than seems necessary, since the annual premium he had to pay exceeded her income. He insured her to the extent of £13,000.

Mrs. Palmer on Monday, the 18th September, 1854, went to a concert in Liverpool. She went rather lightly dressed for the time of year and took a slight chill. She spent the night at Liverpool and returned home the next day, feeling very unwell, so unwell that she went straight to bed. Now it is the sign of a careful poisoner that, whenever possible, he does not begin his work until his victim is already genuinely ill from some other cause. Palmer, on whom payment of the policies of his wife's life must have been a terrible drain, attended her himself in her illness. First thing in the morning

he took her up a cup of tea and some dry toast, but these very simple articles of diet soon made her vomit. The vomiting continued after gruel or tea or arrowroot, all of which were prepared down below by the servant girl, Eliza Tharm, but taken up and given to her by Palmer himself.

On the following Sunday that ancient gentleman Dr. Bamford was called in by the anxious husband, and informed that Mrs. Palmer was suffering from English cholera, and he prescribed some calomel pills. On Tuesday evening he came again, and that was the last time he saw her. She died on Friday, and Dr. Bamford and a colleague of his, Dr. Knight, who was also over eighty and extremely deaf, signed, at the bereaved husband's request, the certificate that she died of English cholera. When old Dr. Bamford saw Annie she was already too ill and weak to describe any of her symptoms to him, but her husband did this for her and gave quite accurately the symptoms of the disease mentioned.

As Annie Palmer lay dying in her " magnificent German bedstead " with, as the catalogue afterwards described, its " panelled footboard, carved cornice and fringe and figured damask hangings," she must, one thinks, have been more than half aware in her clouded and agonised mind that the plump white hands of her husband, those hands of which he was always so proud and always kept so clean, were mixing death for her in the glass that he had ever ready at her lips. The anxiety that fretted her seemed

to be for her boy, and who can doubt that she feared as she lay there, feared and perhaps hoped, that her only remaining child would not be long in following her ?

The nurse pulled the bell just before Mrs. Palmer died, and when the husband appeared, she told him that his wife was dying. He gave a curious stricken look and went out, reappeared again almost at once, but by then Mrs. Palmer was dead. The husband again left, and the nurse followed him into the adjoining room. He appears to have been in a sort of daze and not to have taken in what had happened. He sat rubbing his white hands slowly together and said that he thought he must have dropped asleep. That night he wrote in his diary : " Sept. 29th, 1854, Friday. My poor dear Anne expired at ten past one." Nine days after that there is the following entry in the diary : " Oct. 8th, Sunday : At church : Sacrament." Nine months after the death of his wife, Eliza Tharm gave birth to a child in his house.

Yet there seems to be no doubt that Palmer was genuinely distressed at the death of his wife. He cried over the head of his little boy, and told various people that he himself would not stop long after his dear Annie, in which statement he was prophesying better than he knew. People who knew him well declared that he was really fond of his wife, and this may have been the case ; but fondness for his wife was a luxury that William Palmer simply could not afford in the state of his finances.

What a series of events in that elaborately-furnished mid-Victorian household—the wife dying in the great bed where Palmer never slept again ; the child clasped to his father's heart ; the issuing forth to church and the taking of the Sacrament when everything was over ; and the begetting of yet another child while the body of his wife can hardly have left the house, if indeed it had ! Reaction is a curious and a violent thing, and Palmer's relations with Eliza Tharm may have been, and probably were, not the cool and calculating enjoyment of an opportunity, but the desperate attempt to forget in the most comprehensive of all emotions, if but for a few minutes, the deed that he had just committed.

William Palmer netted his £13,000 from the death of his wife, for although one of the insurance offices suggested holding an inquiry, this suggestion was not acted upon. This £13,000 merely served to pay off Palmer's most pressing debts, but for the time being he was relieved of his fears and embarrassments, and he flung himself into his amours for Eliza Tharm and into his racing with added zest. He took to revisiting London and the gambling houses there, and these, combined with the race-course, landed him in difficulties again.

Once more Palmer had to look about him for a fresh source of money. His younger brother Walter has already been mentioned in particular connection with him—Walter was to be the next to supply Palmer with the necessary funds.

This younger brother seems to have possessed none of William's cunning or cool cleverness, but to have been a big blundering, simple-hearted, unsuspicious man, whose fault was an inability to keep from strong drink. He married a wife with an income of £450, and at one time was himself a prosperous corn merchant, but in spite of the genuine fondness existing between his wife and himself, he became such a slave to drinking and betting that she was compelled to leave him.

Walter Palmer lived in Stafford and, getting into money difficulties with the fatal facility which the Palmers seem to have had, he conceived the idea that he would like to have his life insured, since his brother William kindly promised to lend him some money if he should do so. Walter, however, was under the impression that William was only going to insure him for the amount of the loan, some four or five hundred pounds, whereas William succeeded in insuring his brother for £13,000 (he evidently considered this a lucky number), and had attempted to insure him for the huge sum of £82,000. By now, however, some insurance offices were becoming nervous, and Mr. Waddell, a Stafford surgeon, who acted as medical referee, added a note under his " opinion on the life " as follows : " *Most confidential.* His life has been rejected in two offices. I am told that he drinks. His brother insured his late wife's for many thousands, and after first payment she died. *Be cautious.*" Dr. Waddell met

Walter Palmer one day and told him he would guarantee to make a sound man of him if he only gave up drink and obeyed his instructions, but Walter told him that his brother William was coming to bring him some pills to-morrow, whereupon Dr. Waddell gave up the case. Nevertheless, William took Walter away from his lodgings, which were close to Dr. Waddell's, to another house; and the next that Dr. Waddell heard of his one-time patient was on running into a mutual friend, a Mr. Walkenden, who had a mourning band round his hat. The mourning band was for the unfortunate Walter Palmer, whose funeral Mr. Walkenden had just been attending. Dr. Waddell, shocked and surprised, went off declaring that he would communicate with the insurance office, leaving Mr. Walkenden staring after him. He was a big coarse-faced burly man, this Walkenden, such a great friend of Walter Palmer that he accepted the wages of about 30s. a week to live with him and keep him supplied with gin. In fact, if William Palmer had been content to wait a little, it seems, by Walkenden's own evidence, that his assiduity in supplying his friend and master with spirits would have completed the business quite shortly without the help of any pills, since from the 13th February till the end of July he had procured him nineteen gallons of spirit.

Walter Palmer died after having been more or less in the society of his brother for several days and having been supplied with drink steadily the

whole time. His brother William and his friend Walkenden beside him at the last. He died, said brother William, of apoplexy, and before the body of Walter was cold, William sent a telegram to London asking a friend to put £50 on a horse for him. But then William was very expeditious in everything. He had the body measured for a coffin as soon as the breath was out of it, and the shell was sent home that night. Walter Palmer was buried before Dr. Waddell even knew that he was dead.

On the day after the death, William went to Liverpool to break the news to Walter's widow, and she was most anxious to see her husband before he was buried, but William told her that was impossible as they had been obliged to close him up in lead at once. On the 27th August, Palmer records in his diary : " Went to Stafford to follow Walter to his grave at Rugeley." Walter was buried in the same grave with the wife, the mother-in-law, and the four children of William and with William's friend Bladon. This time, however, the insurance offices were not so complacent as they had been in the case of Mrs. Palmer's death, and Palmer, whose immediate necessities were terribly urgent, was in despair. He wrote a long letter to Walter's widow, giving a list of sums which he said he had lent his brother and asking her to repay him, which she utterly refused to do.

Palmer, now aware that he could not court too close an inquiry into the matter of the insurance, which Mrs. Walter was still unaware had

been for so large a sum, tried to find yet another life whom he could insure, and decided on an acquaintance called George Bate, a small farmer, but described by Palmer as a gentleman who wished to insure his life for £25,000. Bate afterwards said that Palmer had been most friendly and helpful to him in the matter of the insurance, but in spite of the friendliness of the amiable doctor, it was fortunate for Mr. Bate that the insurance offices approached, instead of closing with the deal, sent a detective to Rugeley to make inquiries. The really curious part of Palmer's position at this time was that he had succeeded in making around himself a ring fence of friends which it was difficult to break through. He had suborned the postmaster, a man called Cheshire, who was afterwards severely censured ; he had a tame dog of a man, a lawyer, called Jeremiah Smith, who figures largely in his diary and was always about with him, and various other people mostly in low life whom he had always tipped generously. The detective sent from the insurance office, a man called Field, made the acquaintance of Mr. Cheshire, who was one of Bate's referees. Cheshire informed Field that Bate was an independent gentleman with a good cellar and an income of three or four hundred a year ; but Field, pursuing the matter, found G. Bate, Esq., hoeing turnips and living in one room, for which he paid a few shillings a week. Field questioned Bate and found him to be an entirely ignorant and muddle-headed labourer with not the smallest

idea of what life insurance meant. Field, while he was about it, thought he might as well investigate the death of Walter Palmer, which he did, and arrived at the conclusion that there had been foul play. Field called upon William, told him of his suspicions and that he was going to make inquiries ; and also informed him that the insurance offices had their doubts about his wife's death, to all of which Palmer, without flickering an eyelash or turning colour in the slightest, replied : " Very right and proper." Simpson, a detective who was with Field at the time, declared that never in his life had he seen such impassivity in any human being.

Palmer now found himself in a very difficult position. It was impossible for him to insure Bate, or indeed anyone, to such a high state of suspicion had all the insurance offices come—and he had already spent the £13,000 that had come to him at the death of his wife. He was borrowing money from a moneylender at the rate of 60 per cent., and this moneylender, Mr. Pratt, is a sinister figure in many of Palmer's transactions. Sinister, too, is the description of him given in a contemporary account : " A tall large man, rather fashionable in his style of dress, with an enormous pair of brown whiskers and having the face of a small London boy and the low voice of a retiring female." He lent money to Palmer until the interest due to him was more than £6000 a year ; and now that Palmer began to find himself in such a difficult position, Pratt began to write and dun him for

money. Palmer then was being driven up against the wall by the urgencies of Mr. Pratt's 60 per cent. On the 2nd Oct., after Walter Palmer's death, Pratt demanded £4000, due in a few days time, and threatened proceedings should the demand not be complied with. All Palmer could send him was £250, and on the 31st Oct. Pratt wrote again as follows: "The 250 in registered letter duly received to-day. With it I have been enabled to obtain consent to the following—that with the exception of issuing the writs against your mother, no proceeding as to service shall be made until the morning of Saturday, the 10th, when you are to send up the £1000 or £1500. You will be debited with a month's interest on the whole of £4000 out of the money sent up. I impress upon you the necessity of being punctual as to the bills. You will not forget also the £1500 due on the 9th Nov."

This letter of Pratt's, Pratt of the soft voice and the young face, is the prologue to the final and most spectacular act of the whole sordid tragedy. The first scene of this act is Shrewsbury racecourse on the morning of the 13th Nov. Mr. Palmer, the sporting surgeon, was on the racecourse, looking not quite as dashing and as debonair as he did a few years earlier. His hair had grown very thin and, although brushed over the top of his head, failed to conceal his baldness. His thick neck was swathed in a black cravat. He had a deep mourning band for his brother Walter around his hat, and his heavy

figure was clothed completely in black. He was, as ever, cheerful, full of pleasant smiles for his acquaintances and particularly for his old sporting friend, Cook, an old intimate of the racecourse.

John Parsons Cook was a young man who had gone the pace pretty extensively. He dressed rather showily, with a good many rings and a conspicuous watch-chain; was a cheerful fellow enough, fond of a good drink and always hopeful that he would regain the fortune he had lost upon the turf. Cook had a horse, whose name was to become famous outside sporting circles, entered for the Shrewsbury Handicap—a horse called Polestar. Cook was in luck that day, or so he thought; Polestar won, and Cook was able to cram his pockets with bank notes. He treated all his friends to a champagne dinner that night, and next day found him on the course again in the best of health and spirits. Again that evening he returned to his hotel, The Raven, Shrewsbury, for dinner, and at the Raven occurred an odd little incident which must have struck Palmer afterwards as an almost sinister omen. A woman called Annie Brooks, the same name as that borne by his dead wife, who followed what must have been a very peculiar profession for a woman—the profession of betting on commission and running an establishment of jockeys—called at the inn to see Palmer about a jockey whom he wished to employ. She went upstairs and turned into a little lobby off which Palmer's room, as she knew, opened. As she entered this lobby she

saw Palmer holding up a tumbler to the gas-light which was burning there, and watching the liquid curiously. Without noticing her, he went into his room, returned a moment later with the glass still in his hand and went straight into the room where Cook was sitting. Later that evening a man called Fisher went into the sitting-room which Palmer and Cook shared. Cook invited Fisher to drink and said to Palmer: "You'll have some more?" "Oh no," replied the ever-sober Palmer, "not unless you finish your glass." Whereupon Cook, who was never averse to a drink, replied: "That's soon done," and taking up his glass of brandy and water, drank it off at one go, leaving about a teaspoonful at the bottom. As soon as he had swallowed it he exclaimed "Good God, there's something in it that burns my throat." Palmer's nerve never deserted him for a moment. He picked up the tumbler and himself drank off the spoonful that remained. "What nonsense," cried Palmer, and appealed to Fisher, saying, "Cook fancies there's something in the brandy and water, you taste it." Whereupon Cook, not unreasonably, said, "How can he, there's none left." Cook soon afterwards left the room and was violently sick, but in spite of this, and in spite of the fact that he told Fisher he thought Palmer had put something in his drink, he went next day to Rugeley with Palmer and allowed himself to be installed at the Talbot Arms, so that his friend could the better look after him. It does indeed seem, in reading the list of

Palmer's victims, as though whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. Mrs. Thornton went reluctantly to Palmer's house, saying that she would not live a fortnight. Mrs. Palmer herself seems to have feared that after the death of Bladon, the mysterious deaths would continue, and that her own would be amongst them. Cook actually accused Palmer to Fisher, saying : " That damned Palmer has dosed me," so that Fisher remonstrated with him, saying : " Good God, you suspect this man of such a thing, how can you go back and breakfast with him ? " to which Cook only replied : " Ah, you don't know all." And all these three people, suspicious not only about themselves but about the many other people who had come into contact with Palmer and died, still went with him and took whatever he chose to give them.

On Thursday, the 15th November, Cook was installed in a room at the Talbot Arms, opposite to the house of his friend, William Palmer. On Friday, the following day, Cook dined with Palmer and the tame dog, Jeremiah Smith, at Palmer's house, and returned for once perfectly sober to his hotel. But he felt sick and ill next morning, and failed to keep down either a cup of coffee given him by the chambermaid or a basin of broth sent over afterwards by Palmer.

Palmer was in and out all that day trying to find something which Cook could keep down, but no matter what he gave him, the patient vomited. The invaluable Dr. Bamford, now

eighty-two years of age, was called in by Palmer, and sent a couple of pills made up by himself. The next day, which was Sunday, Palmer again sent over some broth, which this time was tasted by the chambermaid before she took it into Cook. She was violently ill and vomited for five or six hours.

Palmer, still unremitting in his attentions, now wrote off to a friend of Cook called Jones, who was himself a surgeon and who had been with him on the first day of the races, and informed him that Cook was confined to his bed with a very severe bilious attack, asking him at the same time to come over and see him. By Monday Cook was so much better that he was able to eat something, and by Monday afternoon he even got up for an hour to talk to his trainer and jockeys. Palmer only saw him for a few minutes in the morning, as he had to hurry up to London to settle his friend's accounts for him in respect of the Shrewsbury races. Palmer failed in London to obtain all the money he had hoped for on Cook's bills of exchange, and he spent an agitated day wiring and sending letters, but was unable to get more than £450 to send to Mr. Pratt. At ten o'clock that night Palmer arrived back at Rugeley and went straight to see a man called Newton, assistant to a surgeon at Rugeley, of whom he asked three grains of strychnine. He took it, said good-night and hurried straight away.

Later that night Cook took two pills, which seemed at once to bring his illness upon him again with added force. His eyes rolled up, he

screamed with pain and his limbs became contorted. Mr. Palmer was sent for at once, and he came and stood beside him, spoke soothingly to him, and gave him two more pills and a draught. Cook was at once extremely sick and presently fell asleep. It is probable that the draught was laudanum, that Palmer overdid the dose, and that therefore it failed to send him into that too-deep sleep which Palmer must have hoped for.

On the following day, Tuesday, Palmer went to a chemist's shop and bought 6 grs. of strychnine and 2 drs. of prussic acid. That afternoon Mr. Jones, whom Palmer had sent for, arrived to see his sick friend. There was much coming and going that day at the Talbot Arms—what with the frequent incursions of Palmer himself, the visit of old Dr. Bamford, who was again called in, and the arrival of Mr. Jones. This last determined to sleep in the same room as his friend, as it had two beds.

Once again, old Dr. Bamford prescribed some pills and himself went away with Palmer to prepare them. The fumbling doctor made up his pills and placed them in a box, and Palmer then did what struck even the unsuspicious octogenarian as a strange thing. He asked him to write upon the box directions as to how they were to be taken. Bamford thought this very unnecessary since Palmer, who was himself a doctor, was going to administer the pills; but since the latter insisted, he did write: "Pills to be taken at bedtime," upon the box, and this innocuous inscription having apparently satisfied

Palmer, he wrapped the box in paper and sealed it up.

Three-quarters of an hour elapsed between the time when Palmer left Dr. Bamford and arrived back again at the bedside of his sick friend; but when he did come, he not only gave Cook two pills, but before he gave them, he drew Mr. Jones' attention to the writing on the box, observing how wonderful it was that a man of eighty should write so good a hand. Cook was sick again after the administration of the pills, but the pills themselves were not returned, and at about 12 o'clock Jones undressed and went to bed. He had not been between the sheets for half an hour before Cook called out to him and asked him to fetch Palmer at once. Palmer was beside the bed within the space of three minutes, and so far forgot himself as to say a very foolish thing. He remarked that he had never dressed so quickly in all his life before, when it was obvious that he could have had no time to dress but must have been sitting up waiting for just such a summons.

Again Palmer gave him two pills, and the next thing that happened was that Cook was throwing himself about on the bed, shrieking in the agony of his convulsions, his body curved upwards like a bow, so rigidly that it was impossible to bend him. They turned him over on his right side and within a quarter of an hour of his having called out to Jones, he was dead.

Palmer now devoted himself with the same haste that he had shown on the death of his

brother in getting hold of what immediate money he could. He had already obtained all the Shrewsbury winnings that he could, but there were some that were not payable for a week, and then only in London. Palmer posted a cheque the evening that Cook died, which either was signed by Cook or bore his forged name, for the amount of the stakes that were still owing ; and, as he had also done in the case of his brother Walter, he demanded that the body should be laid out at once. In fact, the woman who came to perform that duty must have entered the room a shade too soon—even for Palmer's love of promptness—as she found him searching Cook's pockets.

The next person to arrive at the Talbot Arms was Mr. Stephens, Cook's step-father, who had been very attached to the young man, in spite of his wild ways. Mr. Stephens seems to have suspected Palmer almost from the first, but this did not prevent the latter showing his usual eager officiousness in the matter of the funeral, ordering a shell and an oak coffin, and trying to be of assistance in every way. He carried this assistance to the extent of trying to help Mr. Stephens over Cook's monetary affairs, assuring him that he held himself bills to the amount of £4000 against Cook's estate. Mr. Stephens pooh-poohed this assertion and declared that there would not be four hundred shillings. Mr. Stephens demanded his step-son's betting book, and it now transpired that this had disappeared, as had the betting book of Mr. Bladon under

similar circumstances. Mr. Stephens insisted that it must be found, though Palmer retorted that it would be of no use if it were.

Mr. Stephens seems to have been almost forced into inviting Palmer to join him, Jones and Bamford at dinner, since Palmer remained hanging about and obviously wished for an invitation, and the four men accordingly dined together at about 3 o'clock that afternoon. Nothing about Mr. Palmer seems to have struck Mr. Stephens pleasantly; he disliked his officiousness in having given orders to the undertaker without consulting him, Mr. Stephens. He disliked his insistence on the money which he said Cook owed him, and he disliked his behaviour in the matter of the missing betting book. Stephens told Palmer that he intended to have a post-mortem examination held. Palmer remained perfectly calm, save for a contraction of the throat; nevertheless, Palmer was very anxious to find out who would be the doctors employed at the post-mortem—an anxiety which Mr. Stephens did not see fit to gratify. Palmer's next move was to go to Dr. Bamford—the ever-accommodating—and ask him for a certificate as to the cause of Cook's death. Bamford expressed a slight surprise, saying: "Why should you ask me for it, he was your patient?" but on Palmer saying he would rather Dr. Bamford supplied the certificate, the old gentleman discussed with him as to what should be put upon it, and finally deciding upon apoplexy, filled in the certificate accordingly.

Palmer had many activities in the course of that day, although it was a Sunday. He tried to get Cheshire, the obliging postmaster, to attest a signature, which he alleged to be that of Cook's, upon a paper acknowledging the sum of £4000 as due to Palmer, but Cheshire refused. He also wrote to Pratt, asking him to deny any knowledge of Cook's money affairs, a request he had already sent him in writing before ; and on that same evening he also sent for Mr. Newton, the man from whom he had bought the strychnine on the night of the previous Monday.

Palmer was sitting in the kitchen, reading by the fire when Newton arrived, and he offered him some brandy and water and chatted with him in a desultory way. In the course of the conversation he asked him how big a dose of strychnine was necessary to kill a dog and what would be the appearance of the stomach after death. Newton replied that he did not think there would be any inflammation or that traces would be found—it must be remembered that very little was known in that day as to the properties of strychnine. On receiving this bit of information, Palmer snapped his finger and thumb quietly together and exclaimed : " That's all right."

The next day, Monday, the post-mortem took place, and again Newton, who was to assist, was persuaded by Palmer to drink a couple of glasses of brandy, but this time unwatered. Palmer must have wished that it had been possible for him to dope, and to dope more

strongly than this, all the medical men engaged in the examination. As it was, all he could do was to push violently, and as though accidentally, against the doctor who was taking out the stomach and intestines and putting them in a jar, so that the jar was nearly upset. The doctor saved it, however, tied a skin tightly over it and sealed it. The jar was presently found to be missing, and was discovered at a distance near a different door from that which was used ordinarily, whereupon Palmer exclaimed : " Oh, that's all right " and added that he had removed it there for greater safety and convenience. Dr. Harland, the physician from Stafford, who was conducting the examination, at once examined the jar again and saw that the bladder covering it had twice been cut clean through. He examined the cuts, found the edges were quite clean, and that no contents of the jar could have passed through them. He demanded who had made the cuts. Everyone present, including Palmer, denied having done so. Palmer still seemed concerned for the safety of the jar, and asked Dr. Harland what he was going to do with it. Dr. Harland, who had rearranged the bladder over the jar so that the slits no longer came over the top, replied that he was taking it to the house of a Mr. Frere, which he accordingly did. After leaving Mr. Frere's he went to the Talbot Arms to order his carriage, and here Palmer came up to him and asked him what he had done with the jar and what would be done with it next, to which Dr. Harland replied that

it would be sent either to Birmingham or London that night for examination.

Altogether it may be said that Palmer displayed symptoms of uneasiness at the post-mortem, in spite of the fact that he had said jokingly to Bamford when the stomach was first disclosed, apparently perfectly healthy looking—" Well, they won't hang us yet."

Mr. Stephens, who was determined to take no chances, had decided to carry the jar up to London himself, and, accordingly, he had engaged a fly to take him from the Talbot Arms to the Stafford railway station. This fly stood waiting and ready, but the post boy who was to drive it was met by Palmer on his way to the carriage, who offered him a £10 note if he would upset the vehicle, a bribe which the post boy firmly refused. Mr. Stephens and his jar arrived in London safely, and that evening Palmer was seen in the streets of Rugeley drunk for the first time in his life. That drunkenness of Palmer's was not the only suspicious symptom of his behaviour during the next few days; and indeed, Palmer certainly had enough to worry him.

Up in London Professor Taylor was busied with his analysis of the contents of the famous jar, while at Rugeley itself the Coroner summoned a jury and began an inquiry in a room at the Talbot Arms—a place of sinister suitability, considering what the subject of the inquiry was.

During this period, Palmer haunted the inn like an uneasy spirit, treating anybody and

everybody who would consent to drink at his expense. Mr. Cheshire, the postmaster, has already been referred to as one of the referees when Palmer attempted to insure the life of George Bate. There is no doubt that either from fear or friendship Cheshire allowed himself to be made a catspaw of by Palmer. In his position of postmaster it was, of course, perfectly easy for him to tamper with the correspondence that passed between Professor Taylor in London and the solicitors engaged by Mr. Stephens in Rugeley. Mr. Cheshire did tamper with the correspondence. He opened and showed Palmer all the letters. On Wednesday, the 5th December, Cheshire was able to go and see Palmer who was by then in bed ill, and give him the welcome information that Professor Taylor had written saying that he had found no strychnine in Cook's stomach. " I knew they wouldn't," said Palmer joyfully, " I'm as innocent as a baby." Once again Palmer's mercurial spirit soared up and he must have felt that the luck which had so far attended him was once again going to stand by him.

With the intention of trying to assist luck by every means in his power, he sent a present of game to the Coroner, Mr. Ward, with a note in which he rashly let out that he had seen in " black and white " that Professor Taylor had been unable to trace strychnine, prussic acid or opium. The note went on : " What can beat this from a man like Taylor ? " and ended up with the optimistic sentence : " I hope the

verdict to-morrow will be that he died of natural causes, and thus end it. Ever yours, W. P."

Cheshire eventually was sentenced to two years imprisonment for tampering with the letters in the case and was brought up in custody at Palmer's trial to witness against him.

Palmer, evidently feeling that game alone would perhaps not endear Mr. Ward sufficiently to him, sent him also a letter which, like the game, was delivered by the accommodating hand of that very Mr. Bate who came so near himself to being a subject for an inquest, and there is little doubt that this letter contained a bank note for £5. Palmer was almost at his last penny, but it was a question of life and death with him, as he must by then have known.

On Friday, 14th December, Professor Taylor came down to Rugeley and gave his evidence at the inquiry. All the medical evidence called agreed that Cook had died of tetanus, and although no strychnine had been found in the body, it is true that tetanic contractions of muscles are produced by strychnine; and Charles Robert, the assistant of the chemist, Hawkins, gave evidence that Palmer had bought strychnine from him the day before Cook's death. A verdict of Wilful Murder was returned, and the friendly Mr. Ward, in spite of the game and the bank note, made out a warrant committing Palmer to prison.

Amazing to relate, Palmer's friends still stood by him and declared stoutly that it was impossible he could be guilty; and this faith in his

integrity, which Palmer seems to have been able to arouse in the minds of his intimates, is undoubtedly one of the reasons why he was left unmolested for so long. His unsavoury friend, Mr. Jeremiah Smith the lawyer, who had transacted so many of his dubious affairs for him, went to see him just as Palmer was being removed by policemen. Jerry said: "William, William, how is this?" to which Palmer made no answer, but a few tears trickled down his cheeks—the only time that he was observed to show any sign of emotion whatsoever. Whether Jerry Smith really believed in Palmer's innocence or not, no one will ever know. He was a man of evil reputation, and there can be no doubt that his relations with old Mrs. Palmer, William's mother, were of the most intimate.

Another friend of whom Palmer took farewell before being conveyed to Stafford Gaol was Eliza Tharm, the maidservant. Her child was by then dead. Like Palmer's other illegitimate progeny, it had been sent out to nurse; like them it had been brought back to Palmer to see on one occasion, and also like them it was seized with convulsions while going home, and died.

Nothing now was talked about all over England except the Rugeley poisoning case, and while Palmer lay in prison awaiting his trial, the bodies of his wife and his brother Walter were exhumed. In the body of Mrs. Palmer was found antimony. There is no doubt she had been poisoned by continual doses of that drug. No poison was found in the body of Walter Palmer,

but the supposition was that he had met his death by prussic acid, of which all traces would have evaporated in the time that had elapsed since his death. Verdicts of Wilful Murder were returned at the inquests on both the bodies.

Palmer's house opposite the Talbot Arms was by now the object of most intense curiosity, and people came from far and near just to stand and gaze at it. An enterprising photographer took the house for a fortnight in the June of 1856 and put up a notice which ran as follows :

PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAITS.

C. ALLEN

Respectfully informs the ladies, gentry and inhabitants of Rugeley that he can produce a very superior photographic portrait,

In Gilt and other Frames,

FROM ONE SHILLING TO ONE GUINEA,

and solicits their patronage at the rear of the

PREMISES LATELY OCCUPIED BY
WILLIAM PALMER.

Morbid curiosity is apparently not the modern growth that journalists would have us believe, and many people succumbed to the fascination of being photographed in the notorious Palmer's back garden.

After much delay the trial of Palmer took place, but not at the Stafford Assizes, as it was

considered that prejudice ran too high in his own county for the prisoner to have a fair trial there. A special Act of Parliament had to be put through to enable the trial to take place at the Central Criminal Court, and on 14th May, 1856, proceedings opened.

The judges were : Lord Chief Justice Campbell, Mr. Baron Alderson and Mr. Justice Cresswell. The counsel engaged in the prosecution were : The Attorney General, Mr. E. James, Q.C., Mr. Bodkin, Mr. Welsby and Mr. Huddlestone ; and for the defence : Mr. Serjeant Shee, Mr. Grove, Q.C., Mr. Gray and Mr. Kenealy.

Nobody ever had a harder task than Serjeant Shee, and though there were several points with which he was able to make good play, his greatest difficulty was that the most damning of the circumstances proved by the prosecution he had merely to ignore. Shee based his defence on two things : medical evidence, and an endeavour to show that it was to Palmer's interest to keep Cook alive. Medical evidence is notoriously contradictory. There probably never has been and never will be a case in which it is not possible to call perfectly honest bona fide medical witnesses who contradict each other flatly. The prosecution was able to prove that antimony was present, although no strychnine had been found in Cook's body ; and antimony is an irritant poison which would have produced exactly the symptoms from which Cook suffered during the week of his illness. The accusation was that the

prisoner had made Cook ill with antimony and then finished him off with strychnine on the Monday and Tuesday.

Shee called many medical witnesses to prove that tetanus could be of two kinds—idiopathic and traumatic. Idiopathic tetanus—all cases which in those days were referred to as " idiopathic " probably included the large number of undiagnosed cases of true tetanus as understood to-day—according to Mr. Curling, a member of the College of Surgeons, and author of a book on tetanus, is " apparently self-generated. Traumatic proceeds from a wound or sore." Mr. Serjeant Shee went further and maintained that " idiopathic means in a general sense unaccountable." He went on to say : " Cases of tetanus do continually occur of which you can only suspect the cause and attribute it by hypothesis to a cold or some other vague accident. In such cases you say that the disease is idiopathic not traumatic. The Crown will have it that Cook's was the tetanus of poison, but it is almost an assumption to say that it was tetanus at all. That he died of convulsions or immediately after them is certain, and that they were convulsions similar to those from which he suffered on the preceding night is beyond all doubt."

Serjeant Shee went on to call medical witnesses who proved that Cook suffered from syphilis and that syphilis could lead to convulsions. The prosecution called medical witnesses who proved that Cook did not suffer from

syphilis and that his death was not consistent with any known disease, or indeed with anything except strychnine poisoning.

Serjeant Shee declared that it was to Palmer's interest that Cook should live; that he was obtaining money from Cook and was helping him in his schemes, and that by Cook's death Palmer would actually incur monetary liabilities. The prosecution proved that exactly the reverse was the case. Serjeant Shee argued that if Palmer were poisoning Cook he would never have sent for Cook's intimate friend, Mr. Jones, who was himself a surgeon, to be in the same room with Cook and watch his dying agonies. The prosecution argued that Palmer called in Jones and Dr. Bamford to still any possible suspicions that Cook's death might arouse, by the very fact that two other medical men besides himself had been in attendance on the dying man.

The most damning point advanced by the prosecution—Palmer's purchase on the Monday of strychnine from Mr. Newton, and his further purchase from Mr. Robert, the assistant to Hawkins, the chemist, on Wednesday—Serjeant Shee left entirely untouched in his defence.

If Palmer had, as was suggested by his question to Newton, wanted the strychnine for poisoning a dog, what dog was it? Why had he poisoned it, and where had it been buried? That was a sinister little touch in Mr. Newton's evidence that told very much against Palmer—his questioning him as to the amount of

strychnine necessary to poison a dog, and whether any traces would be found afterwards in the animal's stomach. The expression of relief, " that's all right," which Palmer had ejaculated as though to himself, sounded very sinister when Mr. Newton repeated it in court.

Another little touch which told against Palmer had been the discovery in his house of a book on Toxicology with, written in the margin, " Strychnine kills by causing tetanic fixing of the respiratory muscles."

The witnesses for the prosecution all bore evidence to facts that bore heavily against the prisoner. The witnesses for the defence, such as the unsavoury Mr. Jerry Smith, could do but little to help.

Fisher, the friend of Cook's, who had been present at the brandy-drinking episode, was the first witness called, and he was followed by various witnesses who had more or less important evidence to give, some of it new, some of it merely corroborative.

Elizabeth Mills, chambermaid at the Talbot Arms, a sharp-faced woman in a poke bonnet, deposed to Cook's illness at the Talbot Arms with all its details, such as the various attacks of sickness, her own sickness after tasting the broth, and to her fetching of Palmer when Cook sent for him in his death agony.

Mrs. Ann Brooks, the sporting lady whose name was the same as that of Palmer's murdered wife, was a demure-looking lady in a close bonnet, a black mantle, and a discreet veil. Her

evidence was short and merely to the effect that she had seen Palmer holding a tumbler up to the light.

Mr. Jones' evidence took longer, and it is evident that until Mr. Stephens aroused his suspicions, Jones had not thought that there was any foul play going on—a circumstance which showed how justified Palmer had been in risking Jones' attendance.

Newton's evidence was very damaging, for he not only deposed to the fact that Palmer had called on him at his surgery on Monday night and bought 3 grs. of strychnine, but also that on the next day he ran into him in the shop of Hawkins, the chemist. Palmer obviously had not wished Newton to know what he was buying, for he said to him: "Oh, I particularly want to see you," and, taking him by the arm, led him into the street to ask him a perfectly unimportant question. This so aroused Newton's curiosity, that after Palmer had left the shop he went into it and asked Robert, the assistant, what Palmer had been buying. What Palmer had bought was 6 grs. of strychnine, 2 drs. prussic acid and 2 drs. of Batley's solution of opium.

The most important witness of all was Mr. Stephens, Cook's step-father, who had apparently suspected Palmer almost from the first and had taken such a dislike to his officiousness.

After Mr. Stephens came various medical witnesses—James Myatt, the postboy, whom Palmer had tried to bribe, and Cheshire, the

ex-postmaster. Mr. George Bate, that simple labouring man whom Palmer had described, when trying to insure him, as a " gentleman of good property," was one of the witnesses, and deposed to having taken the game and the note to Mr. Ward, the Coroner.

After the simple Mr. Bate came another and longer series of medical witnesses, proving and disproving statements about tetanus, syphilis, convulsions and paralysis, and giving their opinions upon strychnine and antimony poisoning.

Poor old Dr. Bamford confined himself to a simple account of his own and Palmer's movements from the 17th November, the day of the post-mortem examination.

Mr. Pratt, the whiskered gentleman with the little boy's face and the woman's voice, entered into a long and complicated dissertation on Palmer's and Cook's money affairs.

Serjeant Shee did the utmost possible with the small material, which was chiefly negative, that he could command, but his series of medical witnesses contradicting those for the prosecution were unable to do much beyond generalising ; and Mr. Jeremiah Smith must have done more harm than good to his friend's cause, with his evasions and his admissions.

Serjeant Shee had ended up his speech with a peroration in which he rather rashly declared : " I believe in my conscience that it (the accusation) is false, and that consistently with the rules that govern human nature it cannot possibly be

true." It is not surprising that the Attorney General remarked : " I can only say that I think it would have been better if my learned friend had abstained from giving such an assurance."

The closing speech for the prosecution swept aside with hard facts the assumptions of the defence. " I must," said the Attorney General, " draw your serious attention to a part of the case which has not been met or grappled with. My learned friend said that he would contest the ground with the prosecution foot by foot. Alas ! We are now upon ground which is, as it were, entirely abandoned by the defence. . . . When death reached its dread manifestation, was the prisoner at the bar possessed of strychnine ? Did he obtain it upon the eve of the death ? These are matters of fearful moment ; they are matters upon which it behoved my learned friend to comment with all the vigour of which he is capable and all the means this case afforded to him. Yet this part of the case he has left entirely untouched. The prisoner at the bar obtained strychnine on the Monday night. He got it again on Tuesday morning." And later on—" If it (the strychnine) were for professional use, for the benefit of some patient to whom small doses might be advantageous, where is that patient ? Why is he not produced ? My learned friend did not in his powerful address even advert to the question of the second day's purchase of strychnine. He passed it over in mysterious but significant silence." The Attorney General ended thus : " Now gentle-

men, it is for you to say whether, upon a review of the whole of this evidence, you can come to any other conclusion than that the death of the deceased was occasioned by poison administered by the prisoner at the bar." The jury were of opinion, as all the world knows, that the death of the deceased was most undoubtedly due to poison administered by the prisoner at the bar ; and had they been inclined even after the Attorney General's speech to doubts upon the subject, the summing up of Lord Chief Justice Campbell, which, although fair, weighed terribly against Palmer, would have decided them as to their verdict.

The jury were out of court from eighteen minutes past two until twenty-five minutes to four, when they returned, and the prisoner was put back in the dock. The Clerk of Arraigns asked the momentous question : " Gentlemen of the jury, are you all unanimous in your verdict ? " The foreman : " We are." The Clerk of Arraigns : " How say you, gentlemen, do you find the prisoner at the bar guilty or not guilty ? " The foreman : " We find the prisoner guilty." The Clerk of Arraigns : " Prisoner at the bar, you stand convicted of murder. What have you to say why the court should not give you judgment to die according to law ? " Palmer made no answer ; and the Lord Chief Justice assumed the Black Cap and pronounced sentence.

Palmer was removed to Stafford Gaol. He arrived at Stafford late at night, and the

Superintendent of Police took one of his arms and Mr. Weatherhead, the Governor of Newgate, the other, to lead him through the dark and wet. Only Palmer spoke, and he said : " Dear me, it's very wet ; have you had any rain down here ? " To which the Superintendent replied : " Yes, we have." About five minutes later Palmer murmured : " I have had a wearying trial of it, twelve long days ; " and then he stumbled and said : " Bother these chains, I can't walk properly."

Palmer never confessed or lost his perfect composure of manner at any of the interviews that took place with him in gaol. But—and it is a point, taken in conjunction with the failure to find any strychnine in the body, worth considering—his assertion of innocence consisted only of the words : " I am innocent of poisoning Cook by strychnine." It may be that, since Palmer's was the first case in which the accusation was poisoning by strychnine, the medical and chemical experts found themselves rather at sea—or it may be that Palmer thought the actual poison which completed the affair was not strychnine at all. That he was guilty of Cook's death there can be no doubt, but there will always remain that trace of query as to the actual means.

Palmer was a " good " prisoner, but he went into a passion when the warder removed his comb, thinking he might hurt himself with it. " Send for the hairdresser," he said ; " I will have every bit of my hair cut off." This was

done, and the jailer remarked : " He looks so different you can't imagine ; so sharp." One can imagine that with his long, carefully-smoothed hair cut to his skull, a great deal of Palmer's appearance of blandness must have been destroyed.

Like most condemned men, Palmer ate and slept well. He had no interview, at his own request, either with his mother or his child. Those were still the days of public execution, and when Palmer appeared on the scaffold, he was met by the howling voices of the mob, shouting, " Poisoner, poisoner," at him. Even then he remained perfectly composed, and at that last moment there is something in the calmness of this infamous man which contrasts not unfavourably with the hysterical outcry of those who had come to see him hanged.

So died William Palmer at the age of thirty-one, a man who had several times in his life held every good card in his hand, and who each time, owing to his own innate unwisdom, had done not only the wicked but the stupid thing, as people of his sort almost invariably do.

§ II

The Murder from Revenge

CONSTANCE KENT

THE case of Constance Kent is one of the most curious examples of the murder from revenge, for it is free from that admixture of sex interest which causes most murders of this nature to be dubbed *crime passionel*. This case has been loosely and incorrectly classed as a murder of jealousy, but as a matter of fact, if we look thoroughly into the matter, it is obvious that, although jealousy was to a great extent present in Constance Kent's mind, yet the actual motive of the murder was purely one of revenge. She herself declared in a letter to Dr. Bucknill that she had " no ill-will against the little boy except as one of the children of her step-mother," and explains that if any remark was made at any time which, in her opinion was disparaging to any member of the first family, she treasured it up and " determined to avenge it." Also, in a letter to her solicitor, Mr. Rodway, she refers to " my feelings of revenge." She deliberately chose the much-loved little boy of the second family as the most powerful weapon with which she could hit back at her step-mother for certain ill-judged remarks which that unfortunate lady had made. Indeed, although Constance allowed the matter to swell to much too great pro-

portions in her mind, yet it is true that any sensitive young girl would have felt bitterly one taunt which Mrs. Kent, doubtless in a moment of exasperation, flung at her. Knowing perfectly well, as she did, that Constance's mother had died insane, yet the second Mrs. Kent actually spoke to the girl words conveying her own conviction that Constance was getting as mad as her mother had been. It was not the slur on herself, but that on her dead mother that Constance felt so bitterly, and those words were going eventually to cost the second Mrs. Kent the life of her little boy.

The case is interesting, not only because of the revelation it gives of the heart of a strange girl, but also as an example of the gulf that divides present-day thought from that of 1860.

None of the problems of adolescence, with which a modern counsel for the defence would have made such powerful play, were invoked by Constance Kent's advocate. It is quite certain that the doctrines of Freud and his followers could not have been left out of a similar trial taking place nowadays, but in Constance Kent's day it was considered that justice had been sufficiently tempered with mercy when the woman of twenty-one was sentenced to penal servitude for life for the crime committed when an ill-balanced girl of sixteen.

The drama of Constance Kent's mind, though the stage was a narrow one, was impressive. It has been said that in religion there are all experiences and, if so, this girl, in the terrific

onslaught which conscience made upon her unwilling soul, must have known the whole gamut of spiritual warfare and submission.

On the morning of Saturday, 30th June, 1860, the household of Mr. Kent, an Inspector of Factories, living at the little village of Road, in Somerset, awoke tranquilly as usual.

The character of Mr. Kent is worth a careful survey. He suffered extremely during the years between that fatal Saturday and the date in 1865 when the truth was made plain. He may stand as a symbol of the different morality obtaining in the middle of the last century. His first wife had shown signs of insanity after the birth of her third child, and yet he made her the mother of four more children who died in infancy, and of the unfortunate Constance and a boy called William. After which, not unreasonably as it may seem to us, her mania became so acute and violent that she had to be kept under restraint.

From 1845 until 1852 Mr. Kent's household was looked after by Miss Pratt, his daughters' governess, and in the year following Mrs. Kent's death, Miss Pratt became Mrs. Kent the Second. The eldest boy, who seems to have resented the fact of the erstwhile governess taking the place of his mother, went to sea and died abroad, leaving three girls and William, in the first family. Mr. Kent's habits having been in no way changed by his sad experience, he promptly became the father of three more children by his second wife, and she was expecting

a fourth when the calamity from which they were never to recover fell upon the unfortunate inmates of Road Hill House. Under the weight of this misfortune, which attacked no one with the virulence with which it did the unlucky father, who for years went under the imputation of being a murderer, his character shone out with that resignation to Fate which he would probably have called " submission to the inscrutable decrees of Providence." It is impossible that he could not have known or, if he did not actually know, at least suspect with an awful sense of certainty, the true culprit, but never at any time did he do other than try to shield her from suspicion by his own unfailing kindness and considerateness towards her. How he prevailed on Mrs. Kent to keep her tongue still will never be known. Perhaps it was because of the ghastly suspicion that must always have filled his wife's eyes when she looked at his daughter, that Constance was allowed to take a step so much rarer in those days than it would be now—that of living away from home.

At first she went to live in a convent in France ; after that she became a paying guest in St. Mary's Home, Brighton—an Anglican Sisterhood —and it was the influence of this latter place, led up to, perhaps, who knows how much, by the spiritual influences in the French convent, which led her to the ultimate bourne of her pilgrimage.

There must have been four broken hearts connected with the affair at Road Hill House : Constance's own—that queer vindictive, yet

tender organ which was at once the root and the solution of all her troubles ; that of her father, who was ruined socially and professionally by the suspicions which rested upon him ; that of his wife, the former Miss Pratt, to whom the shock of her little child's murder must have been unforgettable ; and, lastly, that of Inspector Whicher, the officer who all along had believed in the guilt of the young girl, and had even engineered her arrest, and who had been so covered with obloquy and adverse criticism, that his career was spoiled. There can have been few, if any, cases in which one man was so convinced of the guilt of the true criminal as the Inspector, and yet in which the lack of evidence necessary to convict was such that, had not the guilty party ultimately confessed, several innocent people would have remained under an unmerited shadow to the end of their lives.

Mr. Kent little knew when, according to his mid-Victorian concepts of belief in Providence, he was continuing to subject the mentally unsound woman to the trial of annual child-birth, what misery he was laying up in store for himself and for others. It is true that Constance had been a difficult problem ever since his marriage with her former governess. Children, like servants and dogs, are instinctive snobs, and Constance added to her jealousy of her father's new family an arrogant suspicion of the woman she had been accustomed to know in a very different position to that now held by her.

Constance and William, the two nearest in

age of Mr. Kent's first family, had always clung to one another, partly in affection and partly in that sense of being banded together against the world to which imaginative children become the prey. This alliance between the two children was brought painfully into publicity some four years previous to the tragedy, by the fact of the sudden disappearance of the two of them. The following day they were discovered at Bath. Constance had cut off her hair, dressed in some of William's clothes and, with him, had run away probably with the usual romantic idea of childhood—that of going to sea. William had been the first to give in under cross-examination at Bath. Constance had remained impassive, spent the night in the Police Station, and been taken home next day, always in the same state of sullen calm, and this although she was only a child of twelve. It is idle now to think of what gifts of strength and steadfastness this child must have possessed—gifts which could have been turned, with a more individual upbringing than fell to the lot of the young in those days, to such excellent uses. Instead, her brooding sullenness, her way of thinking herself ill-used, and her deadly habit of nursing an injury, were allowed to accumulate within her like poison so long as she preserved outward decorum.

The family of Road Hill House was apparently a happy, as well as a prosperous one, until the fatal awakening of 30th June, 1860.

Elizabeth Gough, nursemaid to the three young children who constituted the family of

the second Mrs. Kent, awoke that morning at about five o'clock and, leaning out of her bed to pull the bedclothes more closely over the youngest little girl—a baby of about twelve months, who slept beside her—she noticed the cot of the little four-year-old boy, Francis Savile, was empty. One of the points raised against Elizabeth Gough in the days that followed was that she felt no alarm on discovering that one of her charges was missing. This she explained by stating that Mrs. Kent, being often anxious about her children, was apt to take them into her own room if they cried. Gough, who was exceedingly tired from a very hard day's work the day before—the sort of day's work that no servant now would undertake—turned over and slept again until a quarter-past six. She then arose, dressed, made her bed, tidied the room and read her usual chapter from the Bible with the utmost calm, and not until about an hour passed in these various exercises, did she go to disturb her mistress, who was in a delicate state of health. To her placid inquiry as to whether Mrs. Kent had Master Savile, came a startling answer in the negative, and on hearing the child had vanished from the nursery, Mrs. Kent came running from her bed. The news that the child was missing ran through the house. The two elder girls, who slept in a room above Mrs. Kent's, said they had seen nothing of the child, and Constance came out to the door of her little room over Mr. Kent's dressing-room to hear what all the fuss was about.

The first discovery of importance was made by the housemaid, and consisted of the fact that the window in the drawing-room, which had been fastened and shuttered by Mr. Kent the night before, was open. There were no traces of footsteps in the mould outside the window and no marks of violence on the fastenings. Mr. Kent, convinced—as who would not have been convinced in similar circumstances, set about only by his own family and trusted dependants ?—that the kidnapper—for so far they had thought of nothing worse—had come from without, set off at once in his trap for the nearest Police Station, which was at Trowbridge. The news of the child's disappearance ran through the village as it had run through the house, and soon volunteers turned out to help in the search. Two men, called Benger and Nutt, searched the grounds, for Road Hill House stood back from the road in its own garden. Away from the house in the shrubbery at the back, there stood a disused closet, and in this, wrapped in a blanket, crammed down in the vault, the body of the little boy was discovered. His head had been nearly severed from his body and, in addition, there was a deep wound above the heart, apparently inflicted after death, as it had not bled.

The men carried the body into the house, and the news was broken to Mrs. Kent and the girls.

Mr. Kent himself arrived soon after, closely followed by the police, of whom the head was a certain Superintendent Foley—one of the most

egregious idiots who ever made a mess of an inquiry, a true descendant of Dogberry.

So far, no suspicion rested upon anybody in the household, and Foley stationed two of his men in the kitchen that night, with what object does not appear to be quite clear. It was hardly likely that the murderer would make a second appearance and come creeping about the house reconstructing the crime, which, apparently, was what Mr. Foley expected.

The inquest was held on the Monday and, short as the space of time was between the discovery of the murder and this second event, there had already arisen, in that irrational and unexplainable manner in which such feelings do spring into life, a strong suspicion against the household of Mr. Kent, amongst the populace. There are always people who can be wise after the event, and villages where everyone knows everything there is to be known about everyone else—and even a great deal more !—are crowded with these sapient beings.

It was considered extraordinary and suspicious that the nursemaid allowed such a long time to elapse between her discovery that the little boy's cot was empty and her visit to her mistress, but this criticism—which was to swell to much more serious proportions a little later—was not, by the Monday, so plainly expressed as the suspicion against certain members of the Kent family.

It is difficult at this lapse of time to obtain a true estimate of the various characteristics that went to make that complicated little world at

Road Hill House, but it does seem as though the Kents could not have been very popular, for people to turn so readily to such dark thoughts about them.

Crowds are notoriously brutal things; for a crowd to express the mob spirit at all has to do so by working on its common factor. Before a crowd of men can be strung to simultaneous expression, some one chord of interest in which they all share has to be struck; their common factor has to be found, and the common factor is never by any chance a refined or specially beautiful quality. If so, it would not be a common factor. The hunting instinct is possibly the most certain common factor that there is. If skilfully worked upon, it can become a dangerous blood-lust of the mob, and though there may be righteous indignation and genuine horror intermingled with the groans and epithets bestowed by a crowd upon a criminal, it is perfectly certain that the hunting instinct has the larger share. Probably every criticism that had ever been levelled carelessly against Mr. Kent, now came up again in the minds of those who had uttered them. There are some people to whom a marriage such as Mr. Kent's second marriage had been is always suspect; and there are sure to have been those who considered that his relationship with his children's former governess had not been what it should have been in their pre-marital days, though this was an imputation for which there was not a shadow of excuse or reason. A step-mother also, is

inseparably connected in the minds of the vulgar with indifference if not with something worse. As a matter of fact, though Mrs. Kent may not have known—indeed, obviously had not known —how to deal with such a difficult nature as that of the young girl, Constance, her other step-daughters had seemed to be very fond of her, and, undoubtedly, she must have exercised much self-restraint in the difficult and anguished days and months that followed her loss.

Feeling was running high, not only against Mr. and Mrs. Kent, but against the step-children. The youthful escapade of William and Constance came uppermost again in people's minds and on their tongues, and such was the obvious manifestation of ill-feeling from those who crowded the Temperance Hall—where the inquest was held—that the Coroner refused to allow the children to be examined in that place, but adjourned the inquest to Hill Road House. There Constance and William were examined, as had been the nurse and housemaid responsible for the inspection of the fastenings of the drawing-room window on the night of the crime. The two men who found the body had also been examined, but they had nothing to say beyond their description of the condition in which they had found it, but nothing was elicited from the family or the servants except the statement that not anything had been seen or heard by anyone in the house. The whole affair seemed shrouded in complete mystery.

There was no one who could have had any

apparent motive for the murder. It was to no burglar's interest to steal and kill one child. Mr. Kent was obviously not a man to object to the proportions that his family had assumed; the nurse had apparently been fond of her little charge, and Mrs. Kent was obviously heart-broken.

A verdict of " Wilful Murder " was returned against " a person or persons unknown."

Where there is no motive, the busy minded at once begin to seek one out, and it is, perhaps, not surprising that the first suspicions of the authorities should have been directed against the nurse, Elizabeth Gough. She was taken into custody, but no charge was made against her by the local police, and she was allowed to go free again.

The public voice now began to grumble loudly against the way in which the affair was being conducted. The Coroner, Mr. Sylvester, had refused to examine Mrs. Kent at the inquest, and this action of his brought much censure upon him.

In *The Times* of Wednesday, 11th July, the following passage occurs:

" . . . We must speak and do our part in enquiring who is guilty of this foul deed. Every effort, say the local papers, has been made to detect the murderer, but hitherto without effect. Perhaps so; but we are of opinion that many efforts yet untried may be made, and that in due time the murderer will be brought to justice. Without intending any disrespect to the Coroner or his jury, we take the liberty of saying that the circumstances demand a much more searching investigation than they have received at the hands of those functionaries. The Secretary of State must take

it up, and the case must be sifted by a Commission under his authority. As far as we can understand the story, it seems that the house was thoroughly closed up on the night preceding the murder. In the morning the house was partly open ; but it does not appear to have been opened by violence from without. Therefore the inference is plain that the secret lies with someone who was within. This seems so plain that we do not hesitate for an instant to say that, however painful such a proceeding may be, and however for a while the innocent may seem to suffer with the guilty, yet it must be held that the persons who composed the household must collectively be responsible for this murderous and dreadful event. Not one of them ought to be at large till the whole mystery is cleared up. Let a *cordon judiciaire* be drawn round the house, and let parents and nurse, master and servants, be confined within it until the truth is found. We cannot divest ourselves of the belief that the child suffered death at the hands of someone belonging to the house. We beg to ask you, what was the antecedent state of the family circle ? It has been stated that two of the children once ran away because of some family disagreement. Have there been any recent repetitions of these disagreements ? On what terms were the children of the first wife with those of the second ? Had there been any previous strife in which the murdered child was involved ? Was the father a good father ? It is very painful to have such questions suggested, and we feel for all parties while we write them, but no fear of hurting anyone's feelings must be allowed to stifle enquiry. Of the servants we should like to learn more. What were their antecedents, habits and characters ? On what terms were they with one another, with the children and with their master and mistress ? Had anything occurred to provoke spite towards children or employers ? Were any of them, or was anybody in the house, subject to mental delusions or violent impulses ? . . .

"We should like to know why the father went to Trowbridge immediately the child was missed; why he thought that it had been stolen, and how he accounted to himself for the *modus operandi* of the thief; why he didn't first search the premises, raise the neighbourhood and call in all conceivable help. We are willing to make allowances for a father's agitation, indecision, mistakes and confusion under such desperate circumstances, but at the same time we should like to know how what he did that day weaves in with the context of his temperament and habits."

It will be seen from the above that feeling was already running very high against the unfortunate Mr. Kent, and the theory that already began to weave itself in people's minds was that he had been concerned in the crime.

It was on the Tuesday, the 10th July, that Superintendent Foley apprehended Elizabeth Gough on suspicion, and on the following Monday, 16th July, she was brought before the Bench and liberated. Already, so swift was the revulsion of opinion in the public mind, people began to say that Elizabeth Gough was undoubtedly innocent.

Meanwhile, Detective Inspector Whicher had been sent down from Scotland Yard to take charge of the case. Almost at once he came to the conclusion—from which he was never afterwards to be turned—that the guilty party was the sixteen-year old Constance Kent. On Friday, 20th July, a meeting of Magistrates was held behind closed doors, and to it Inspector Whicher brought Constance, in custody. She sat mute throughout the enquiry, with her eyes cast down,

but Whicher described how, when he read the warrant to her, she burst into tears and kept on saying : " I am innocent ! I am innocent ! "

She was remanded and taken to Devizes Gaol, whilst maintaining a dogged silence.

People now began to say that Detective Inspector Whicher had certainly found out the truth, and all the suspicious circumstances connected with Constance began to be remembered.

One of the chief of these circumstances was the fact that a night-dress of Constance Kent's had disappeared—" at the laundress's," said the Kent family, who had previously complained of missing articles, but the laundress herself stoutly denied that she ever had the night-dress in question. Laundresses are notoriously careless, and the fact that there had been garments missing before made the Kents very sure of their ground. Also, the housemaid was certain that she had put Constance's night-dress into the linen basket as usual ; but it was certainly an unfortunate coincidence for Constance that it should be the night-dress she was wearing the week of the murder that had disappeared.

When Whicher asked Constance on the 16th July how it was that she could only produce two night-dresses, whereas the linen list showed three, she replied that she only had two, as the laundry had lost the third for her. This answer did not seem entirely satisfactory to Whicher, as he had discovered from the housemaid that while she was writing the list and sorting out the linen basket, Constance sent her on an

unnecessary errand, and so was left alone for a few minutes in the same room with all the dirty linen.

Elizabeth Gough was cross-examined before a Magistrate on 27th July, when Constance was again brought up before them.

In spite of the suspicion that had rested upon herself, the nursemaid showed no tendency to try to divert it upon Constance. Indeed, she stated in evidence : " I have never heard Miss Constance say anything unkind towards the little boy that is dead." And when she was asked : " Did you ever see her conduct herself unkindly towards the little boy ? " she replied definitely in the negative.

Two of Constance's schoolfellows were then examined, but nothing more was elicited from them than a slight recountal of a few vague complaints of her home such as any imaginative child might have given. Emma Moody, the first girl to be examined, deposed that :

" I said upon one occasion, when we were talking about the holidays—we were going for a walk towards Road—I said : ' Won't it be nice to go home shortly ? ' She said : ' Yes, perhaps it may be to your home, but mine is different.' She also led me to infer that she didn't dislike these children. She said that the second family were much better treated than herself and her brother William. She said this on several occasions. We were talking of dress at one time, and she said : ' Mamma will not let me have what I like. If I said I would have a brown dress she would let me have black, or just the contrary.' "

What girl is there who might not have said the

like, even about her own mother, let alone a step-mother ? What girl of sixteen has ever seen quite eye to eye with her mother in the matter of dress ?

Evidence was also given to the effect that the night-dress found on Constance's bed on the morning of the murder was quite free from blood stains ; in fact, it was extraordinarily clean, considering that the day was a Saturday, and that the garment had been in wear for a week—with the starch still stiff in the frills in the collar and wristbands.

The story of the missing night-gown was gone into, but seemed to have no bearing on the case, and Mr. Edlin, who was representing the prisoner, asked the Bench to liberate the prisoner and restore her to her friends, and declared with some truth that :

" There was not one tittle of evidence against her, not one word on which the finger of infamy could be pointed against her. Although a most atrocious murder had been committed, it had been followed by a judicial murder not less atrocious. If the murderer were never discovered, it would never be forgotten that this young lady had been dragged like a common felon to Devizes Gaol. The fact alone was quite sufficient to insure the sympathy of every man in the county and the kingdom. The steps which had been taken must blast her hopes and prospects for life, and those steps had been taken solely on the suspicion of an inspector of police, acting under the influence of the reward which had been offered. The fact respecting the missing bedgown had been cleared up to the satisfaction of everyone who had heard the evidence that day, and no doubt could remain that this little peg, upon which this fearful charge had been grounded, had fallen to the ground. He asked the

magistrates, therefore, to pause and say whether for one moment longer this young lady should be kept in custody. Without reproaching Inspector Whicher for what he had done, he must say that the hunting up the schoolfellows of Miss Constance Kent reflected ineffable disgrace upon those who had been the means of bringing them there. Nothing that had been elicited from those young ladies showed anything like *animus* on the part of the prisoner towards the deceased child, nor had any motive been established which would induce the prisoner to imbrue her hands in the blood of the poor little child. He appealed to the Bench, therefore, the case for the prosecution being exhausted —and a weaker one he had never heard—to perform their duty to the country and to the prisoner by at once saying that the evidence adduced satisfied them that the charge was groundless, and that Miss Constance Kent should at once be discharged."

Mr. Edlin's speech was followed by applause, and Constance Kent was forthwith discharged. She returned home and, according to a contemporary description from *The Times*, a most affecting scene followed :

" Her sisters and parents clasped her in the most passionate and exciting manner, embracing her most tenderly, and the sobbing and weeping and embraces were continued for a considerable time. At length, however, it subsided, and since then the young lady has presented a very subdued and contemplative demeanour."

By now a violent reaction had set in in the public mind in favour of Constance, and Inspector Whicher was overwhelmed with abuse for ever having made the arrest.

Public opinion veered round once more, and

the next person to be blasted by its breath was Mr. Kent. It had already determined that Elizabeth Gough, or her imaginary paramour, was guilty. It had then absolved her, and fastened upon Constance. It now acquitted Constance, and fastened firmly upon Mr. Kent, with Elizabeth Gough as an accessory, on the theory that he had had an illicit love affair with Elizabeth Gough, that little Savile had awakened and seen more than he should—more than he could be trusted to keep his childish tongue still about—and that Mr. Kent had deliberately murdered his child to preserve his own fair name.

The fact that up till now he had been accused of favouring his second family too much did not in the least check those who were trying to make out that he had wantonly sacrificed his most dearly loved child of that family.

One indignant gentleman wrote to *The Times* as follows :

" Suppose—and every step of this case, except the actual murder, is based on supposition,—suppose that something, call it an intrigue, a burglary, or what you will, was taking place beneath the roof that night, suppose the child awaking from sleep ' saw a man where a man should na' be,' would not that supply a motive for the crime ?

" To my mind, two things that occurred the next morning are fraught with suspicion,—the ostentatious reading of the Bible for an hour by the nurse, who knew that the child was missing, and who ought immediately to have made enquiry in Mrs. Kent's room ; and the decision which was at once arrived at by certain parties that the child had been murdered.

" If the police would follow out these two points, they would, perhaps, be more successful than they were in their ' fussy activity ' about the night-dress of a schoolgirl."

There certainly seemed grounds, to a casual observer, for suspecting Elizabeth Gough, but there was really no point against her that was not easily disproved. Her enemies declared that it was extraordinary that she had slept through the entrance of the abductor, and the removal of the child ; yet what is there odd about a young woman of twenty-three, who had been up until about eleven the night before, and who had, in company with the only other two servants kept by this family of seven people, been busy all the previous day in extra cleaning ?

In spite of the accumulation of ill-feeling against the unfortunate nursemaid and still more unfortunate Mr. Kent, Elizabeth Gough was liberated, and the chairman of the enquiry spoke very favourably of her behaviour in her time of trial. The only thing which had become clear through all the enquiries, and the maze of suggestions was that the murder must undoubtedly have been committed by a member of the household. One of the three servants, or Mr. or Mrs. Kent, or one of the three older children must beyond question have been guilty of that innocent blood. There had been no marks of violence on the opened window or the shutters ; no stranger to the house had opened all those doors and found his way unerringly to the little cot, and thence to the outside closet. Guilty one

of the members of that household undoubtedly was, and the stigma of guilt clung to them all.

On Saturday, the 11th August, a statement was made which temporarily diverted suspicion from Elizabeth Gough. A working man gave himself up and confessed to the murder. He stated that Mr. Kent had himself handed the child to him out of the drawing-room window; he said he was promised by Mr. Kent a sum of money, but that he had not been paid, and, as he was sure the curse of God was upon him, he had confessed.

This man was found to be insane and to have no connection with the crime, but the feeling against Mr. Kent was running so high by this time, that a great many people believed it.

As to Inspector Whicher, his action was even commented on in the House of Commons, it being held that the Inspector in question had acted in a most objectionable manner; after all his boastings of the evidence he could produce, the young lady was discharged by the magistrates, and they believed there was not the slightest doubt that she was innocent of the charge.

The result of all this was that the nursemaid was apprehended in September, and in October was again brought before the magistrates, and again released.

For there was a further detail that had impressed itself upon the Inspector's mind.

In November an extraordinary incident came to light. Apparently on the fatal Saturday, when

the police were searching the kitchen at Road Hill House, they discovered in the boiler of the furnace a chemise covered with blood. The egregious Foley had dismissed the incident as of no importance, and had never even mentioned it, although he must probably have placed his two policemen in the kitchen that night to see whether any one got up to try and destroy what was perhaps an incriminating garment. The fact that nobody did so apparently settled the matter for Mr. Foley, and he troubled no more about it.

As a matter of fact, it transpired that the stains on the chemise had nothing to do with the crime, and were simply the result of an ordinary incident of nature to which Constance had at that time become subject, and which in these days would be taken into account as affecting her unbalanced condition. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the ineffable Foley had found a blood-stained garment concealed about the house on the day of the crime, and had not thought it worth mentioning. It is no wonder that Inspector Whicher wrote very bitterly to say that he had been kept in ignorance of this discovery.

The Kent family was ruined; they had to leave Road, and took up their abode in Wales, trying to live as quietly and inconspicuously as possible. Only Mr. Whicher still clung to his opinion, in spite of all the disgrace that had befallen him.

The American Civil War must have come as a blessing to the Kent family, for the Road Mystery passed out of the newspapers, and in

their obscure Welsh home let us hope that their wounds began to heal as well as was possible. considering the misery of the accusations that they must always have felt dogged their footsteps.

Meanwhile Constance lived in her French convent and grew to womanhood. There is a photograph extant of her, taken when still a schoolgirl, in which she looks, to our modern eyes, to be a grown-up woman, when she was still a mere child, and for this the fashions of the day are to blame—the hair bundled into a net at the back ; prim collar and tie ; the dark velvet jacket spreading out pyramid-wise over a swelling crinoline ; the boat-shaped hat with the drooping plume—such as would have been worn at that same period by women twenty years older than herself. All these things combine to make a schoolgirl of that period look very much more of a sedate and settled woman than she can possibly have been.

Also, Constance Kent's features were of the regular and strongly marked variety—good-looking enough, bright, and perhaps too determined for the period in which she lived.

It is difficult—in fact, it is impossible—with any certainty to reconstruct the character of those who lived in a day before our own consciousness, and the utmost it is permissible to do is to draw deductions, not only from the circumstances of their lives, but from the contemporary accounts of any reactions to such circumstances. Psychology was not then a science,

as it is now, and, though doubtless much that would be clear to our modern eyes in the flame of our greater illumination remained dark—even unguessed at by those of that generation—yet without doubt also we wander, nowadays, down many false and devious paths, missing the plain truth left for us to see upon the high road, in a manner which they were spared. The many complicated streams which went to make up that complex creature—for complex and abnormal she must have been—Constance Kent, were taken into small account by the doctors and lawyers of her day.

Contemporary writers dwell on the cold-bloodedness of the crime as its most monstrous feature, without seeing that it was the very abnormality of that cold-bloodedness which should have marked her out for special treatment.

Constance Kent's salvation, like her damnation, came from within herself, and the really interesting thing about her, as far as it is possible to judge at this distance of time, is the fact that apparently she was not—as the congenital female criminal invariably is—a poseuse. She did not commit the crime for the sake of notoriety. She was normal enough to wish to remain unsuspected; and therefore we can rule her out at once from the great class of congenital youthful criminal into which she might, to superficial observation, seem to fall.

Neither, when she took the tremendous step of confessing, do we find her, to put it vulgarly, "out to make a splash." She went through with

the thing as plainly as might be. There seems to me to be no valid reason for doubt that it was genuinely the working of her conscience that drove Constance Kent to the confession that electrified England in the year 1865.

I lay stress on these points because they are extremely rare in any criminal, and so rare as to be practically unique in a female criminal; and it is upon the inner evidence afforded to the mind by these points that Constance Kent, at least in the opinion of the writer, deserves to be placed in the class of occasional criminals and not in that of the congenital criminal, in spite of all the morbid stigmata which her crime displays, and which would seem to place her in the latter category.

Therefore, arguing along these lines, it is permissible to say that with a more understanding upbringing, such as she might have obtained nowadays, Constance Kent, with her determination, her force of feeling and her rare power of secrecy, might have made a very fine thing of her life, instead of turning it into a sordid tragedy.

What imaginative child is there who has not seen himself in some violent and picturesque rôle?—saving his whole family from a burning house, or suffering, misunderstood, in silence, for another's fault and eventually being cleared with honour in the eyes of his accusers?

Doubtless Constance Kent had begun by voicing to her schoolfellows her discontent with her father's new marriage and the state of things at home; and had found that the recital of such

picturesque woe as is involved by having a step-mother gained her sympathy from her school-fellows. This, in its turn, would make the whole situation more real to herself, so that she would see slights where none were meant, and would hug to herself the idea that she was a misunderstood and unappreciated, unwanted daughter of the first family, whom her father had ceased to love. It is all the more remarkable with this inflation of the imagination from which she evidently suffered—as does every intelligent child, given the necessary circumstances—that she so successfully should have pulled out of that quagmire of theatricality which besets the feet of adolescence, and have met at last face to face in the stern conflict, for which there was no issue save a hard and fast decision, the spectre which inhabited her soul.

In 1863 Constance was sent to live at Brighton, at St. Mary's Home, which was under the spiritual direction of the Rev. A. D. Wagner, who was Perpetual Curate of St. Paul's Church. Fully to understand the tremendous effect which these surroundings had upon Constance Kent, it is necessary that one should recapture in some degree the peculiar religious atmosphere of that time, so alien from us now. Every daily paper was full of the doings of the so-called Puseyites. Questions of ritual, ranging from the wearing of surplices to the use of the Private Confessional, convulsed England daily.

The world has quite suddenly grown past this particular view of life in almost every religion

professed by its inhabitants. Tolerance, mutual respect, candid acknowledgment of ignorance as to the actual attributes both of the Deity and the human soul, have taken the place of the passionate and heartfelt arguments not only upon questions of ritual, but also upon questions of dogma. Being prepared for Confirmation by such an honest, fiery-souled, thoroughly convinced man as Mr. Wagner, so worked upon the mind of Constance Kent, that she came to believe the world well lost, if she could yet by any means save her soul.

In those days no such simple creed as sustains most of us blundering humans nowadays was held, except by a very few, who concealed the fact—and there is this to be said for the black and whiteness, the hard and fastness of the creed which Constance Kent found closing about her every day—it had a definite, practical value.

Constance Kent's confession lifted the cloud that for five years past had rested upon her father, upon an innocent nursemaid, upon the whole family, in fact upon the entire household that had once lived at Road Hill.

For let there be no mistake about it—there was no necessity, save that of spiritual compulsion, for the confession of Constance Kent. The affair would never have been raked up again, and she had not that dire necessity which even most hardened criminals would feel—of confession to save the neck of some innocent person. She could only have had two motives. One purely

spiritual and the other theatrical, and, as I have pointed out, I see no evidence of the latter dread quality surviving into her adult years. Undoubtedly it swayed her childhood and adolescence, but then so it does that of every imaginative young creature.

Religion, then, extremely clear-cut religion which there was no evading, tracked Constance down. It has often been said, and with great truth, that the religion of the Victorians was a very hypocritical affair, an affair of Sundays only, of best clothes, of outward conformity, and that it held no real part in the lives of those who professed it.

From this charge the Ritualistic Movement, with all its tiresomeness, its absurd fussing over unimportant points, was at least free. It presented to the people the forms and privileges of Catholicism and, unlike the Continentals, accustomed to those forms and privileges from their youth and able to come to some sort of terms with them, the English people had to conform their practice to their new belief, if they were not to be written down utter triflers and hypocrites.

Constance's mind cannot, it is needless to say, have been at rest during the time that had elapsed since the murder. She must have known that she was even more than suspect by her family in that she was allowed to live away from them, and was moved from Home to Home, always under supervision. The thing she had done must have assumed more and more dreadful proportions in

her pre-occupied mind. Only the stubbornness of her strong nature can have enabled her to carry through with her attitude of pretended innocence for so long. When one realises that for the whole of that time letters must have passed between her and her family—for the Victorians were rigid about these conventions—and, further, realises that a deadly suspicion must have weighted the pen of her father whenever he wrote to her, and a deadlier knowledge dragged at hers, it is possible to begin to understand what an unreal and nightmare quality those years must have held.

There must, of course—for so resilient is human nature—have been times when she thought and hoped to forget it, when she cheated herself into an almost forgetfulness. The novelty of the scenes abroad, the strange language, the different life, must all have helped her towards the illusion that it was not only possible to forget, but possible perhaps that the whole thing had been a mistake.

But the Hound of Heaven was on her track, if ever He were on that of mortal being, and it was in cheerful, banal, prosperous Brighton that Constance was finally tracked down.

She admitted her guilt to Mr. Wagner, though under the seal of confession and, therefore, of course, his tongue was tied ; but in Holy Week in the year 1865, worked on doubtless by the solemn and dreadful pageant of successive services, she came to her great decision, and informed Miss Graem, the Superior of the Order,

and Mr. Wagner, that she had made up her mind to make public confession.

Mr. Wagner gave her the advice that any priest of the Catholic Church would have given her—that is to say, he told her that what she contemplated was right ; that without so doing she could not hope to obtain peace for her soul, but that he himself would reveal nothing that she did not tell him out of confession.

Constance Kent went up to town and delivered herself up at Bow Street before the Chief Magistrate, Sir Thomas Henry ; Mr. Wagner and the Mother Superior went with her.

She was taken to Sir Thomas Henry's private room ; she was dressed in mourning, with a heavy lace veil, which entirely hid her face.

She told her story formally, though quietly. Superintendent Durkin and Mr. Williamson—Chief Inspector of the Detective Force—were in charge of her.

It is curious to notice how local and public feeling were inimical at first to Mr. Wagner and Miss Graem. The good Protestant people were suspicious of undue influence of Romanising tendencies—of the sinister coercion they had heard existed in convents.

Sir Thomas Henry asked Constance : " Am I to understand, Miss Kent, that you have given yourself up of your own free act and will on this charge ? " She replied " Yes."

He then went on to warn her, as in duty bound that anything she said would be written down and might be used against her.

To which she replied that she quite understood. With the scrupulous fairness generally observed towards prisoners in England, Sir Thomas then asked: "Is this paper now produced before me in your own handwriting and written of your own free will?" She replied that it was.

The charge was then entered as follows: "Constance Emilie Kent of 2, Queen Square, Brighton, charged upon her own confession with having alone and unaided on the night of the 29th June, 1860, murdered at Road Hill House, Wiltshire, one Francis Savile Kent."

Sir Thomas then asked her: "Have you any objection to signing the statement you have here made? I must again remind you that it is the most serious crime that can be committed, and that your statement will be used against you at your trial. I have had the words written copied upon this charge-sheet, but I do not wish you to sign it unless you desire to do so."

Constance in answer said that she would do so, and he replied:

"There is no occasion for you to sign the charge unless you wish it. I will have your statement attached to the depositions and I will again ask you if you have made it by your own desire, and without any inducement from any quarter whatever to give yourself up?"

When he was reassured upon this point, Mr. Wagner was then sworn, and deposed to having known Constance Kent for about twenty-one months, as an inmate of St. Mary's Home.

Sir Thomas asked him whether he had made any inducement to Constance Kent to cause her to make the confession, and Mr. Wagner replied in the negative. He explained that it had been entirely Constance Kent's own idea to come up to a London Magistrate, and that apart from the confession, which she had made to him under the seal of the Confessional, she had since made a statement similar to that upon the charge-sheet.

Sir Thomas was obviously one to whom the word " Confessional " acted as an irritant, and he replied : " I will not go into that point here —it may be gone into at the trial—perhaps very fully."

Then, turning to Constance Kent, he added : " I hope you understand that whatever you say must be entirely your own free and voluntary statement and that no inducement that may have been held out to you is to have any effect upon your mind ? "

CONSTANCE KENT : " No inducement ever has, sir."

SIR THOMAS : " I am anxious that you should most seriously consider that."

MR. WAGNER : " I wish to mention that many are in the habit of coming to confess to me as a religious exercise, but I never held out any inducement to her to make a public confession."

SIR THOMAS : " Yes, I think you ought to mention that. Did you, in the first instance, induce her to make a confession to you ? "

MR. WAGNER : " No, sir, I did not seek her

out or in any way ask her to come to Confession. She herself wished to do so."

Sir Thomas: "If you think that the confession she now makes has been induced in consequence of anything which she has said to you or which you have said to her, you ought to say so."

Mr. Wagner: "I never even recommended it. I have been simply passive. I thought she was doing right, and so I did not dissuade her."

Sir Thomas: "But do you say that you did not persuade her?"

Mr. Wagner: "I do say so."

Sir Thomas then once again warned Constance Kent that she was not bound to make any statement unless she desired to do so, and her deposition was then read over and she was asked if she wished to add anything to it, a question to which she replied in the negative.

Sir Thomas then explained that as the offence had been committed in Wiltshire the trial would have to be there also, and he must send her to be examined before the Magistrate in that district.

The warrant was then made out and handed, with the other documents in the case, to Inspector Williamson, who took the prisoner in a cab to the railway station, still accompanied by Mr. Wagner and Miss Graem, the conventual dress of the latter exciting much attention among the little group gathered outside Bow Street.

The thing worth comment, I suggest, about this interview, is that Constance Kent did not make a scene. She was quite undramatic.

Her ordeal took place at Trowbridge, where she was brought up before the Magistrates sitting in Petty Sessions.

Again she was dressed in deep mourning, with her thick veil, but even through that covering it was to be seen that her face was deeply flushed.

The evidence was purely formal, and merely a recapitulation of what had taken place before Sir Thomas Henry, and the prisoner was committed for trial at the ensuing Wiltshire Assizes.

As a dramatic spectacle, the trial was, of course, a complete failure, for not only was there no doubt of the prisoner's guilt, but she refused to enter the conventional plea of " Not Guilty," and her defender, Mr. Coleridge, Q.C., was therefore limited to a purely formal little speech before the sentence was passed.

It must, indeed, have been the strangest trial on record. It cannot have occupied more than a few minutes. The court was crowded. In the middle of a deep silence, the Clerk of Assize spoke to the prisoner in the usual formula :

" Constance Emilie Kent, you stand charged with having wilfully murdered Francis Savile Kent at Road Hill House on the 30th June, 1860. How say you—are you guilty or not guilty ? "

The PRISONER—in a low tone of voice : " Guilty."

MR. JUSTICE WILLES : " Are you aware that you are charged with having wilfully, intentionally and with malice, killed your brother ? "

The PRISONER—with head bent low : " Yes."

MR. JUSTICE WILLES : " And you plead guilty of that ? "

The PRISONER hesitated. MR. JUSTICE WILLES waited for some minutes in breathless silence and then said : " What is your answer ? "

The PRISONER still remained silent.

MR. JUSTICE WILLES : " I must repeat to you that you are charged with having wilfully and intentionally and with malice killed and murdered your brother. Are you guilty or not guilty ? "

The PRISONER—in a rather more firm voice said : " Guilty."

MR. JUSTICE WILLES—to the Clerk of Assize : " Let the plea be recorded."

A dead silence ensued for some minutes, which was broken by MR. COLERIDGE, Q.C., afterwards Lord Chief Justice, who said :

" My Lord, as counsel for the defence, acting on the prisoner's behalf, before your Lordship passes sentence, I desire to say two things—first, solemnly in the presence of Almighty God, as a person who values her own soul, she wishes me to say that the guilt is hers alone, and that her father and others who have so long suffered most unjust and cruel suspicion are wholly and absolutely innocent ; and, secondly, she was not driven to this act, as has been asserted, by unkind treatment at home, as she met with nothing there but tender and forbearing love ; and I hope I may add, my Lord, not improperly, that it gives me a melancholy pleasure to be the organ of these statements for her, because on my honour I believe them to be true."

The CLERK OF ASSIZE, addressing the prisoner: "Constance Emilie Kent, you have confessed yourself guilty of the murder of Francis Savile Kent; have you anything to say why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

PRISONER: "No."

MR. JUSTICE WILLES then assumed the black cap, and addressed the PRISONER in the following terms:

"Constance Emilie Kent, you have pleaded guilty to an indictment charging you with the wilful murder of your brother Francis Savile Kent on the 30th June, 1860. It is my duty to receive that plea which you have deliberately put forward, and it is a satisfaction to me to know that it was not done until after having had the advice of counsel, who would have freed you from this dreadful charge, if you could have been freed thereof. I can entertain no doubt, after having read the evidence in the depositions, and considering this is your third confession of the crime, that your plea is the plea of a really guilty person. The murder was one committed under circumstances of great deliberation and cruelty. You appear to have allowed your feelings of jealousy and anger to have worked in your breast until at last they assumed over you the influence and the power of the Evil One."

Mr. Justice Willes here became deeply affected and burst into tears, which prevented him from proceeding with his remarks for some minutes.

The prisoner at the bar, who up to this time had maintained the greatest composure, could

no longer witness the proceedings with apparent indifference. Turning her head from the Judge, she burst into a passion of tears, which was audible in every part of the court, and produced a profound impression upon all who were witnesses of the scene.

Mr. Justice Willes continued as follows :

" Whether Her Majesty, with whom alone the prerogative of mercy rests, may be advised to consider the fact of your youth at the time when the murder was committed, and the fact that you were convicted chiefly upon your own confession, which removes suspicion from others, is a question which it would be presumption for me to answer here. It well behoves you to live what is left of your life as one who is about to die, and to seek a more enduring mercy, by sincere and deep contrition, and by a reliance upon the only redemption and satisfaction for all the sins of the world. It only remains for me to discharge the duty which the law imposes upon the Court without alternative, and that is to pass upon you the sentence which the law adjudges for wilful murder : that you be taken from the place where you now stand to the place whence you came, from thence to the place of execution, and that you be hanged by the neck until your body be dead ; that when your body be dead it be buried within the precincts of the Gaol in which you were last confined : and may God have mercy on your soul."

The capital sentence was commuted for that of penal servitude for life.

A detailed account of the manner in which the crime was committed was afterwards furnished to the public by Dr. Bucknill, the physician who had examined the prisoner by the desire of the Government, in order to form an opinion as to the condition of her mind.

The following letter appeared in the public papers :

" Sir,—I am requested by Miss Constance Kent to communicate to you the following details of her crime ; which she has confessed to Mr. Rodway, her solicitor, and to myself, and which she now desires to be made public.

" Constance Kent first gave an account of the circumstances of her crime to Mr. Rodway, and she afterwards acknowledged to me the correctness of that account when I recapitulated it to her. The explanation of her motive she gave to me when, with the permission of the Lord Chancellor, I examined her for the purpose of ascertaining whether there were any grounds for supposing that she was labouring under mental disease. Both Mr. Rodway and I are convinced of the truthfulness and good faith of what she said to us.

" Constance Kent says that the manner in which she committed her crime was as follows : A few days before the murder she obtained possession of a razor from a green case in her father's wardrobe, and secreted it. This was the sole instrument which she used. She also secreted a candle with matches, by placing them in the corner of the closet in the garden, where the murder was committed. On the night of the murder she undressed herself and went to bed, because she expected that her sisters would visit her room. She lay awake watching, until she thought that the household were all asleep, and soon after midnight she left her bedroom and went downstairs and opened the drawing-

room door and window shutters. She then went up into the nursery, withdrew the blanket from between the sheet and the counterpane, and placed it on the side of the cot. She then took the child from his bed and carried him downstairs through the drawing-room. She had on her night-dress, and in the drawing-room she put on her goloshes. Having the child in one arm, she raised the drawing-room window with the other hand, went round the house and into the closet, lighted the candle and placed it on the seat of the closet, the child being wrapped in the blanket and still sleeping, and while the child was in this position she inflicted the wound in the throat. She says that she thought the blood would never come, and that the child was not killed, so she thrust the razor into its left side, and put the body, with the blanket round it, into the vault. The light burnt out. The piece of flannel which she had with her was torn from an old flannel garment placed in the waste bag, and which she had taken some time before and sewn it to use in washing herself. She went back to her bedroom, examined her dress, and found only two spots of blood on it. These she washed out in the basin, and threw the water, which was but little discoloured, into the foot-pan in which she had washed her feet overnight. She took another of her night-dresses and got into bed. In the morning her night-dress had become dry where it had been washed. She folded it up and put it into the drawer. Her three night-dresses were examined by Mr. Foley, and she believes also by Mr. Parsons, the medical attendant of the family. She thought the blood stains had been effectually washed out, but on holding the dress up to the light a day or two afterwards, she found the stains were still visible. She secreted the dress, moving it from place to place, and she eventually burnt it in her own bedroom, and put the ashes or tinder into the kitchen grate. It was about five or six days after the child's death that she burnt the night-dress. On the Saturday morning, having

cleaned the razor, she took an opportunity of replacing it unobserved in the case in the wardrobe. She abstracted her night-dress from the clothes basket when the housemaid went to fetch a glass of water. The stained garment found in the boiler hole had no connection whatever with the deed. As regards the motive of her crime, it seems that, although she entertained at one time a great regard for the present Mrs. Kent, yet if any remark was at any time made which in her opinion was disparaging to any member of the first family, she treasured it up, and determined to revenge it. She had no ill-will against the little boy, except as one of the children of her step-mother. She declared that both her father and her step-mother had always been kind to her personally, and the following is a copy of a letter which she addressed to Mr. Rodway on this point while in prison before her trial :

" ' Devizes, *May 15th.*

" ' SIR,—It has been stated that my feelings of revenge were excited in consequence of cruel treatment. This is entirely false. I have received the greatest kindness from both the persons accused of subjecting me to it. I have never had any ill-will towards either of them on account of their behaviour to me, which has been very kind.

" ' I shall feel obliged if you will make use of this statement in order that the public may be undeceived on this point.—I remain, Sir,

" ' Yours truly,

" ' CONSTANCE E. KENT.

" ' To Mr. R. Rodway.'

" She told me that when the nursemaid was accused she had fully made up her mind to confess if the nursemaid had been convicted ; and that she had also made up her mind to commit suicide if she herself was convicted. She said that she had felt herself under the

influence of the devil before she committed the murder, but that she did not believe, and had not believed, that the devil had more to do with her crime than he had with any other wicked action. She had not said her prayers for a year before the murder, and not afterwards until she came to reside at Brighton. She said that the circumstances which revived religious feelings in her mind was thinking about the sacrament when confirmed.

" An opinion has been expressed that the peculiarities evinced by Constance Kent between the ages of twelve and seventeen may be attributed to the then transition period of her life. Moreover, the fact of her cutting off her hair, dressing herself in her brother's clothes, and then leaving her home with the intention of going abroad, which occurred when she was only thirteen years of age, indicated a peculiarity of disposition, and great determination of character, which foreboded that, for good or evil, her future life would be remarkable.

" This peculiar disposition, which led her to such singular and violent resolves of action, seemed also to colour and intensify her thoughts and feelings, and magnify into wrongs that were to be revenged any little family incidents or occurrences which provoked her displeasure.

" Although it became my duty to advise her counsel that she evinced no symptom of insanity at the time of my examination, and that, so far as it was possible to ascertain the state of her mind at so remote a period, there was no evidence of it at the time of the murder, I am yet of opinion that, owing to the peculiarities of her constitution, it is probable that under prolonged solitary confinement she would become insane.

" The validity of this opinion is of importance now that the sentence of death has been commuted to penal servitude for life ; for no one could desire that the punishment of the criminal should be so carried out as

to cause danger of a further and greater punishment not contemplated by the law.

" I have the honour to remain, your very obedient servant,

" JOHN CHARLES BUCKNILL, M.D.

" Hilmerton Hall, near Rugby, *August 24th.*"

It will be seen from this detailed confession that Inspector Whicher had been uncannily correct in what he had maintained at the time of the first inquiries about the murder—namely : that the night-dress which was sent to the wash that Saturday, and which the household had imagined was the night-dress she had been wearing the whole of the week, was a clean garment which she had put on after the murder, and the actual gown in which she had done the deed she had succeeded in destroying without it having been found.

Thus there passed, into a retreat more complete than that of any of the institutions in which she had lived since her commission of the crime, this unfortunate girl.

She served twenty years of her sentence and came out an elderly woman.

For part of her sentence she was detained at Portland Prison, where she made many of the mosaics for St. Peter's Church.

When she was released from Millbank in 1885 she went once more into a religious retreat.

She doubtless must have felt entirely out of touch with the world, and anxious to go to the only sort of life of which she knew anything.

Rumour has it that, later on, she went abroad,

but from the time the law released her, a merciful emptiness seems to have swallowed her up. No one knows what happened to Constance Kent, nor how or where she died. Certain it is that, in spite of the extremely brutal and callous crime which she committed, modern psychology would have found many excuses for her, but it is perhaps better that she should have been treated in the simpler and harder manner of those days.

For it would have been all but impossible, under present methods, for Constance Kent not to have acquired an inflated sense of her own importance, and the stark spiritual solitude in which she wrestled with her soul must have—surely it is permissible to think so ?—gained her more peace in the long run than she could have acquired under different methods.

Hers was a harsh, strong, violent and revengeful nature, and for such, bare and rigid truth is the only comforter.

§ III

The Murder for Elimination

THE DE QUÉRANGALS

ELIMINATION—the actual removal of someone who stands in the way—is a factor, of course, in every murder, but the pure murder for Elimination is a distinct thing. It is obvious that if a man murder from jealousy or to gain an inheritance or an actual sum of money, he cannot satisfy either his jealousy or his cupidity without eliminating the person who provokes those emotions. But in such cases as those, the crime falls under the heading either of killing for jealousy or killing for gain, and the elimination is secondary. On the other hand, in a true murder for elimination, the actual removal of the victim occurs because his continued existence is an inconvenience or a danger.

I quoted in my Prologue the typical case of Jeanne Weiss, née Daniloff, and her lover Roques. Roques and Jeanne had for each other that *grande passion* which has been so often productive of crime. Nevertheless, the attempted poisoning by Jeanne of her husband does not come under the heading of a *crime passionel*, but under that of a murder to eliminate.

Roques and Jeanne indulged their passion to the full. Jeanne's last child was her lover's, and it was because only the death of her husband could enable her to live with her lover without

having to give up her children that she decided on the former's death.

As I have pointed out, a *crime passionel* may come under several of the primary classifications of murder, but is not in itself anything but a secondary division.

Madeleine Smith, to whom was accorded the Scottish verdict of " Not proven," which is, it must never be forgotten, inclusive of the English verdict of " Not guilty," cannot be considered, of course, as having taken the life of her lover L'Angelier. Had she done so, it would have been a very pure example of the murder of elimination, since he was holding a threat of blackmail over her head by threatening to produce her love letters and thus break off her intended marriage with Mr. Minnoch.

Murders of this class are interesting, in that they are of necessity always calculated affairs, even though the motive—as with Jeanne Daniloff—may spring from a passion. In the case of the strange happenings in the Quérangal family, the wish to indulge more freely in certain passions, a wish certainly enormously strengthened by boredom—the boredom of existing legitimate ties—was the ruling motive which made the elimination of the victims a necessity in itself, quite apart from any specific gain other than greater freedom. Hence, the Quérangals present a wonderful picture of a whole decadent family, ready to remove those who inconvenienced them quite as ruthlessly as Palmer murdered people for monetary gain.

In the eighties of the last century, the Quérangal family—which was of the old Breton nobility—was still extant in the commune of Ploufragan. Old Madame Quérangal and her two children, a son and daughter who bore the charming names of Aimé and Aimée, lived in a dilapidated lonely old manor house, a place of crumbling turrets and decaying walls, standing back from the road and surrounded by big trees. They were poor to the point of sordidness, but old Madame Quérangal never permitted the peasants to address her save with a respectful use of "Madame," although her husband had been illegitimate; and she herself, if rumour is correct, was not so particular about actions as about forms of address; for the stories whispered about the "goings on," as the vulgar saying has it, at the manor house were too shocking for repetition save in a pathological work, and these goings-on were shared by such of the peasantry as old Madame chose to favour. She was actually brought to book by law for stealing a purse from a farmer, some lard from a neighbour and a shawl from a draper; and also for what the French term "a public outrage on modesty," in which latter charge her daughter was cited as an accomplice.

The Quérangal family was another of those often found in criminal records which suffered from a grievous heredity. Of many misalliances, legitimate and otherwise, in this decaying race, most unpleasant was perhaps that of young Quérangal's grandfather, who had had for his

mistress the wife of the public executioner, a sinister portent when the shadow of the guillotine was to hover over the heads of himself and his sister, who were the descendants of this unblessed union. For the high tide of accusation first lapped against the crumbling outworks of this degenerate household when the son, young Aimé, was charged in conjunction with a peasant woman called Simon, with the murder of the latter's husband ; and at the same time that the sister Aimée was awaiting trial under accusation of having killed her first husband, old Madame lay in the same prison as her daughter on a charge of theft. This old grandfather, who cheated the executioner, cheated death also until he was over eighty. In fact, at this date he had only been dead three years. It was indirectly his death which led up to the events described at the trials of the two Quérangals, for he had left to his grandchildren 25,000 francs apiece—a poor sum, but enough to tempt people whose standards were low, enough certainly to make the woman Simon wish to be rid of her drunken husband and free to marry the possessor of such a sum ; enough also to make Aimée Quérangal, or Perrot as she was at that time, wish to get rid of a peasant husband who could no longer be considered fit for a wife possessed of such a *dot*.

The woman Simon was a village Messalina who rivalled old Madame Quérangal herself. She had a catholic taste in lovers, ranging with impartiality from the most brutish labourers to the members of the bourgeoisie. Love she had

to have and more of it than any man on earth could have supplied her with, and her husband was certainly the last even to approach her standard—a thin, dull, dragging sort of person, whose only passion was for brandy. He certainly inconvenienced his wife as little as any man could do, and, in fact, he played for gifts of brandy that rôle of a complacent husband which other men higher in the social scale have played for money or advancement. It was no tiresome jealousy on the part of Simon which necessitated his removal, but simply the fact that his wife did not like him. For it is a great truth that it is almost impossible for the outsider ever to judge how hardly one human being may press upon the life of another.

It is easy to say in many a case that the motive does not seem strong enough to have made the murder necessary, and certainly this seems so in the case of a murdered husband or wife who puts no obstacle in the way of illegitimate passion but is content to take a price and remain quiescent. Yet that does not always suffice to save the victim from a murder of elimination, for the simple reason, which cannot be stated too forcibly, that it is impossible to tell how grindingly the mere presence of one human being in a house may crush down another.

Whether the woman Simon were ashamed of the figure her husband cut amongst their intimates; whether his continued presence got upon her nerves, or whether she were simply so sick of him that she could not wait for nature,

assisted by brandy, to make her a widow, will never be known ; but the case for the prosecution was that she had decided first to kill him by encouraging him to drink (she used to give him a ghastly mixture of brandy, gin and red pepper) and that finding this process too slow, she decided to use one of her lovers as the instrument of his death. The lover, so declared the prosecution, whom she chose as the most suitable for her purpose, was young Aimé Quérangal, who was just twenty years old and who was entirely enslaved by this village wanton of thirty-five.

The 8th March, 1881, Simon spent the day drinking with young Quérangal. They went from cabaret to cabaret, swearing eternal friendship. That evening two women walking down a deserted road—and most roads were deserted in that bare, bleak, sparsely populated country—heard cries for help coming from a little pond near by. It was already dark, but the moon shed sufficient light for them to be able to see, as they rushed in the direction whence the cries came, a man lying face downwards with his head under the water, his body upon the bank. The man was struggling feebly but was apparently too drunk to save himself, although the water in the pond would not have come up to his knees had he been standing erect. The two women seized hold of him and dragged him out of the muddy liquid which was choking him, and as they did so, young M. Quérangal ran up, asking what was the matter. The two women began volubly to explain, but Simon lay upon the bank

too full of mud and brandy to give any account of what had happened. M. Quérangal ran to fetch help, telling everyone he met that " poor Simon had lost his way when dead drunk and fallen into the pond." Simon's constitution was as strong as the coats of his stomach, and within a week he was up again, but with his nerve apparently somewhat shaken, for sometimes, when he was not too drunk to speak, he would murmur despairingly : " I shan't live till the feast of St. John ; I shall never see the harvest again," and the facile tears of self-pity would trickle from his reddened eyelids. If he had so much of prevision he had also the peasant's blank acceptance of fate, and he stayed on with his wife, getting drunk with her lovers probably because it never occurred to him that any other course of action was possible. Perhaps, also, he hoped that the strength which had so far saved him would continue to do so, for he once said to a friend : " I can't be killed [*je suis intuable*], but my wife says she'll get me in spite of that."

On the 21st May neighbours heard the woman Simon calling about the place for her husband with a solicitude unusual in her. " Has nobody seen him ? " she kept on asking. " He disappeared this morning and hasn't been back since," and she continued to call. The neighbours started to search, not without telling each other that Simon must be dead for his wife to show herself so thoughtful on his account ; and when they discovered the unfortunate man lying dead in a field near the farm, still holding in his

cold hand the brandy bottle which he was never seen without, no surprise was felt by anyone—unless his wife's surprise were genuine, which no one believed. She and young Aimé Quérangal were arrested; and then happened, what nearly always does happen after a crime committed by two people—the weaker confessed. Young Aimé declared that his mistress, disappointed at the failure of 8th March, had insisted on his attempting Simon's life again, and that while he held the husband down, the wife had strangled him with a kerchief. This was the line of defence Quérangal maintained at the trial, and the two presented an interesting spectacle in the dock, for the hatred between them was now as violent and active a thing as what, for the sake of argument, must be called their love, had been earlier. The woman Simon never faltered in her asseveration that Aimé Quérangal alone was guilty; that he had vowed to be revenged upon her because she had refused to be his mistress, and that this was the manner of his revenge.

The case against the woman Simon was, one might imagine, black indeed; and yet, as the trial developed, it seemed as though the weight of the accusation were going to press more heavily upon the instrument than upon the intelligence which had made use of it. Quérangal insisted that Simon had been strangled by his wife, but the result of a medical examination was that the doctor maintained Simon had been strangled with one hand only, and that a left hand, for upon the left side of the victim's neck

was the mark of a thumb and on the right those of the four fingers. The doctor made Quérangal place his hand in position upon these bruises, and it was found that his fingers fitted the finger-marks upon the neck. Nevertheless, the evidence, taken with that elasticity as to what is permissible which obtains in France, made it impossible for the widow Simon to maintain the attitude of having refused her favours to Quérangal, for it was evident there was not a young man in the commune who could not boast both of the favours of the woman Simon and those of the old woman Quérangal. Witness after witness added to the sordid story of promiscuous connections. Witness after witness had a tale to tell of threats uttered by the woman Simon against her husband, and of fears expressed by himself.

Jeanne Simon appeared to greater advantage on the bench of the accused than did her fellow prisoner. In spite of her thirty-five years and her life of continuous debauchery, she was still strikingly handsome, with delicate regular features and dark hair and eyes, while her quick intelligence never failed her in the face of the mass of accusation brought against her. Quérangal, though a finely built young man with a certain flashy air of gentility, had a furtive, sullen look compared with her. His advocate, M. Hamard, did not attempt, in view of his client's confession, to deny his guilt but exerted all his eloquence towards excusing it. He laid great stress on his client's youth, on the fact of his having confessed, and he drew a vivid picture of this ardent young

man who, leading a narrow, depressing life of poverty and isolation, fell into the clutches of a mistress much older and more experienced than himself, whose vigour and fascination had swept him off his feet. According to M. Hamard, the woman had been the dominating party in the crime, and had placed before her weak and passionately devoted lover the alternative of murdering her husband or never having anything to do with her again.

There can be little doubt but that M. Hamard's view was the correct one, in so far as she was the dominating influence in the partnership ; and even though the medical evidence seemed to show that Aimé's was the actual hand that committed the murder, it must have been at her instigation. It may be thought M. Marheu's task was even more difficult than that of M. Hamard, yet he succeeded the better. Whether the widow Simon had been so widespread in her favours that even among the jury there were those who wished her well ; whether it were the reluctant admiration that strength of any kind wins from the onlooker ; or whether her physical charms seduced the impressionable imaginations of her countrymen, it is impossible to say at this lapse of time. M. Marheu did his best to render credible an incredible defence. He asserted, for proof of course, there could be none, that Aimé Quérangal alone killed Simon in the hope of gaining favour in the eyes of the wife, but that she, whatever her private morality may have been, was so aghast at this deed that she had

repulsed him with horror and done the very thing which he had most dreaded—broken with him for ever. It was in revenge for that rupture, so argued M. Marheu, that young Quérangal, seeing he himself could not escape from the consequences of his act, had determined to drag her down with him.

Before the jury could make up their minds, they demanded that the murder of Simon should be reconstructed for them then and there in the courthouse, and an obliging witness accordingly lay down and acted the part of the man about to be murdered. The two accused were conducted to his side whilst everyone in the room, magistrates, witnesses, jury and members of the public, all stood up and craned over each other's shoulders in excitement.

" Show us how you held Simon," demanded the President of young Quérangal. " This way," was the answer. " I took hold of his two arms," and as he spoke the young man seized hold of the witness's wrists. " And you," continued the President to the woman, " show us how you seized hold of your husband's throat." The widow Simon burst into a passion of tears. " But I was not there, gentlemen of the jury," she cried. " I tell you I was not there ! I am innocent ! " Uproar in the courtroom ; tears from the woman ; excited comments from the rest of the world. The President restored order and spoke again to Quérangal, adjuring him not to accuse the woman if he alone were guilty. With an energy that equalled hers Quérangal

replied : " She held her husband by the throat and strangled him ! "

The jury deliberated for three-quarters of an hour and then returned to court with their verdict. The woman Simon they declared to be " Not guilty " ; and to Aimé Quérangal, with that irrational clemency that the French sometimes display in their legal proceedings, they accorded extenuating circumstances. The woman Simon flung herself on the neck of M. Marheu in another flood of tears, this time of gratitude. " I will pray for you all my life," she promised him. It is not on record with what emotion the promise of her prayers filled M. Marheu. She continued on a note of exultation : " I was innocent. The jury easily saw that I was innocent." Aimé Quérangal was sentenced to hard labour for life, and he received his sentence with a cold apathy that contrasted with his violence earlier in the proceedings.

The last male representative of the Quérangal family was thus removed from the danger of perpetuating his ill-fated race. The next day his sister was brought up in the same court under the same weight of accusation as that which had borne him down.

Aimée was twenty-eight years old. She was a big, handsome woman with a high colour, brilliant eyes and rich brown hair that she wore in heavy bands beneath her cap of finely gauffered muslin and lace with its spreading wings, such as was worn by all the Breton women in that locality. The courthouse must have

presented a most wonderfully decorative appearance at these trials, where all the men and women were attired in the beautiful traditional costume of the country. The Breton has a grave and pious aspect which invests any ceremony in which he takes part with the effect of a religious rite—an effect enhanced by the white coifs of the women, arranged like huge tranquil butterflies against the dingy walls of the courthouse as though a band of nuns were seated in a chancel. But Aimée Quérangal, or Aimée Roussel as she now was, had that in her face, in her ardent eyes, her full mouth and her swelling figure, which contradicted the nunnishness of her attire. She, the descendant of old Quérangal and the executioner's wife, daughter of the haggard and elderly Venus whose vices had ravaged the youth of the countryside, and sister of the young man whose passions had proved so strong and his will so weak—had nothing that was saintly and nothing that was womanly, beyond the mere animal fact of her sex, in the whole of her mental and physical make-up. Hate, rather than love, seems to have been the most dominant passion of this sinister family, in spite of the tender Christian names of its two younger members. It was hate, the violent hate existing between the mother and the daughter which had brought Aimée Roussel to the bench of the accused. Her first husband, Marc Perrot, had been dead and buried for over two years when a quarrel between the two women first set justice in motion. Aimée had been overheard abusing

her mother when the old woman was under arrest for stealing, and the mother had retorted, "At least I didn't kill my husband," to which the undaunted Aimée replied in her turn, "Well, if I killed him you made me." The result of this indiscreet brawl was that the corpse of Marc Perrot was exhumed; and the accusation brought against Aimée was: "Having provoked some man unknown, by promises, artifices and instructions to commit murder, supplying him with the arms and assisting him in the commission of the crime."

Perrot was nothing but a small farmer, a poor peasant who wrung a bare living out of the soil—as good a husband as Aimée Quérangal, with the vicious history both of her family and herself, could hope for. Nevertheless, she could not resign herself to the miserable hard life of the little farm and, following her mother's example, she took to herself lovers—if indeed she had ever given them up, which seems extremely unlikely. Perrot, who seems never to have been able to find out for certain how many lovers his wife had, suspected her of infidelity on the day of the wedding itself during an interval when she disappeared, and for the rest of the day kept closely beside her. Her most favoured lovers, whom she continued to see during the years of her married life, were Mathurin Roussel, whom she afterwards took as her second husband, and a certain Yves Bévillon, whose tragic history was to be still more closely entwined with hers. Perrot was a simple soul, with simple and con-

ventional ideas as to the honour of his house; he was no complacent husband such as Simon. His methods of maintaining that honour were also simple, and when he saw it was of no avail to implore his wife to live decently, he took to beating her, and life became one long quarrel between the two.

In the month of January 1879, three years before Aimée was brought to trial for the alleged murder of her husband, she began to spread about the village the rumour that her husband's brain was affected. "He was a dangerous fellow," she told everyone. "In the night he would jump up in bed and, standing erect, would reel off long incoherent sentences." She managed to build up thus, touch by touch, a sort of nightmare figure of her husband in the minds of the neighbours. He became a legend while yet alive; the children ran screaming away from him and the grown people avoided him; while he, poor thick-headed, bewildered peasant, tried in vain to puzzle out why he was so shunned.

On the 4th February, at about 5 o'clock in the morning, Aimée Perrot ran screaming out of the farmhouse, calling for help as she went, and covered with blood. She roused the nearest neighbours and told them the following story. According to her, Perrot at about 2 o'clock that morning had awakened suddenly and seized her by the throat, crying that he was going to kill her. Then he seemed to change his mind, and bursting into tears grovelled at her feet, begging incoherently for pardon. This phase, too, had

passed and he had fallen into a heavy sleep. After a while she, too, had fallen asleep again, only to be awakened about 4 o'clock by a loud report. She saw her husband still lying beside her with his head blown open and the blood streaming from it. He had, so she said, blown his brains out with his gun. People seemed to have doubted the truth of this account ; nevertheless, no steps were taken to disprove it, and Marc Perrot was duly buried. Two years later his widow married Roussel, her old lover—Yves Bévillon was already dead.

It was Yves Bévillon who was suspected of having been Aimée's accomplice in the murder of her husband. This Yves, if he were guilty, had been, with Aimée's little daughter Emilie, the only witness of the death of Perrot, and neither of these two had lived to tell their tale—a fortunate coincidence for Aimée if it were nothing more. At the trial, school friends of Emilie came forward with accounts of how the little girl had told them that after the report of the shot which had killed her father, she heard a door open and someone go out. It was reported, though this was not proved, that Aimée had shown satisfaction when her child died, but the mother's eyes filled with tears whenever the little girl was mentioned in the course of the trial ; and it certainly was a fact that she had carried maternal care to such lengths that she had made the nightshirt her husband died in into two chemises for the child—an action which it is possible to look on as perhaps a callous piece

of economy. But then Aimée Roussel was nothing if not utilitarian and unsentimental, as the following picturesque incident shows :

In the course of the trial the court betook itself, judges, prisoner and all complete, to the farmhouse of Perrot, to reconstruct the crime. Now, Perrot's head, which had been exhumed, had been mounted on a little pedestal and presided over the courthouse, like a mummy at an Egyptian feast. It was taken along to the farmhouse and placed upon a table beside the bed where Perrot had died. So as to establish beyond a doubt—that is, as far as the word of Aimée could be relied on, which perhaps was not very far—the relative positions of the husband and wife, an obliging gendarme got into the great Breton bed to represent Perrot, and Aimée Roussel was requested to lie down beside him. This she had no objection to doing, but she feared for her exquisite lace and muslin coif and, taking it off, she looked round for somewhere to put it out of harm's way, and finding nothing better for her purpose than the skull of her husband, she placidly made use of it as a milliner's dummy—the white butterfly wings spread out on either side of the grinning skull of Marc Perrot like some fantastic symbol of immortality.

It is incidents such as these, only met with in the case of persons of a very low grade of morality, that show how tremendously far removed a human being can be from the more or less sensitive creature whom we are accustomed, and rightly accustomed, to think of as normal. Troppmann

identified the mutilated bodies of his victims without a quiver, and yet it is on this sudden confrontation of the murderer and the murdered which the French police so largely rely to make the guilty man give himself away. It is a test that fails with the thoroughly brutalised who, although they may have plenty of intelligence of the cunning order, possess nerves that are deadened both physically and mentally so that they fail to re-act to the shocks that would cause normal nerves to vibrate. It was no act of bravado in Aimée Roussel when she placed her coif upon the skull which still bore the mark of the fatal bullet. It seemed to her a simple and sensible action.

Old Madame Quérangal also was one of these untouched spirits ; it was she who had done what none of the other superstitious country people would have dared, and had moved the body of the supposed suicide. She had placed it in a convincing position to receive the visit of the gendarme the morning of the death—the gun in the right hand—and afterwards had washed the body and shaved the dead face to a running accompaniment of pleasant little jokes, only broken in upon when she caught sight of the police surgeon coming down the road, a sight which drew an exclamation of fear from her lips. However, the surgeon, who had merely made a superficial examination, made up his mind that it was a case of suicide and departed almost at once ; whereupon Madame Quérangal began to dance in front of the corpse. While she was thus engaged, the Angelus rang out from the village

church, and all the neighbours who had crowded into the little house went down upon their knees. The Angelus ceased ; the neighbours stood up and began to depart, shocked perhaps by this dance of death so gaily footed to the sound of a church bell. " Eh bien ? " exclaimed the old woman ; " and is nobody going to stop and sleep the night with the widow of poor Perrot ? " Yves Bévillon had the rashness, or the cynicism, to jump at the offer, but whether because Aimée merely thought it unwise to provoke such a scandal as such an arrangement would have drawn about her ears, or whether because she had no further use for Yves Bévillon, this remarkable proposition came to nothing.

The gendarme was the first witness at the trial. He described how he had found the young widow in floods of tears, her hair dank with blood, weeping by the hearth, unable to speak, only capable of indicating by a gesture the bed where the corpse of Perrot, neatly prepared for inspection by old Madame Quérangal, lay clasping the gun. Presently Aimée repeated through her tears the story she had already told the neighbours—the story of the sudden awakening in the night, of the two phases of her husband's madness, and of the second awakening at the sound of the gunshot. She described the smell of burning that had met her nostrils from the sheet which had caught fire, and of how she had crouched, covered in her husband's blood, waiting for the day to dawn before she dared leave the house. The little six-year old Emilie, since

dead, had also spoken up and told the gendarme how she had heard a door open and shut in the night, but to his untrained mind this important detail had no significance. When this point was raised at the trial, Aimée declared that all the doors of the house were fastened with a key and a bolt, and that hence the child could not have heard a door open and shut. But little Emilie was no longer there to give her evidence on this matter, and it was only the theory of the prosecution that what she said she heard was the shutting of the door after the murderer had been let out by her mother.

The President, according to French custom, interrogated the prisoner in the form of a series of accusations. "Your child saw everything," he told her. "There was a recess in your room where the assassin must have been hidden. It was he who went out when he had committed the crime, and this assassin the voice of the public has declared to be Yves Bévillon your lover, who is to-day dead." Certain it is that, however Marc Perrot met with his death, it was in the same room with his little girl, who must have crouched as terrified as her mother had declared herself to be through the long hours till dawn.

M. Tetot, a small landed proprietor and a near neighbour of Perrot's, deposed that the latter was bailiff, and that he had been a good workman, honest, sober and of amiable disposition; but a little while before his death he had become very depressed and complained that since his wife had come into an inheritance of 25,000 francs she

had become rough and disdainful with him—he had said that she treated him like a dog.

Many other neighbours were called as witnesses, but very little was extracted from any of them. The Quérangal influence lay upon the land like a blight, and the fear inspired in the peasants was so real that no one would say more than he could possibly help. The Quérangal legend had for three generations saturated the minds of the simple superstitious country-folk, and it was a legend of horror that must have indeed seemed to them bordering upon the supernatural. It is almost certain that the executioner, whose wife had been the mistress of old grandfather Quérangal, had died of poisoning, as had the husband of another mistress of his in 1835. An inquiry had even been opened on these deaths, but nothing definite had been discovered, for the poison suspected was arsenic, and at that time Marsh's test was not in use in France. Whatever the truth may have been about those earlier sinister happenings, the fact is beyond a doubt that they had contributed largely to the awe in which the Quérangal family was held.

The witness who was most eagerly expected was old Madame Quérangal, for the prosecution built largely upon the hatred that existed between the mother and daughter. Madame Quérangal, however, hated the rest of the world even more violently than she hated her own daughter. She made a striking figure upon the witness bench, dressed in her prison garb of dark blue with a cross-over shawl of brown. She still bore traces

of remarkable beauty in her ravaged countenance. Her eyes were blue and malignant, her features regular, and the hands folded upon her lap were the fine delicate hands of the aristocrat. The mother and daughter confronted each other without a trace of emotion.

"What do you know about this affair," demanded the President of Madame Quérangal. "Nothing," she replied briefly, and this was the attitude she maintained throughout the interrogatory, taking refuge sometimes in complete silence. She bowed to the court with the grace of a duchess and went back to her prison.

After the mother came the son, also from prison, dressed all in black—the Sunday broadcloth of the Breton peasant—though whether in mourning for his victim or for the wreck of his own life he alone knew. No more was extracted from him than from his mother. He confined himself to saying that, as far as he knew, Perrot had committed suicide and suffered from a deranged mind.

The only evidence, if evidence it could be called, was the accumulated mass of rumours, much of which would never have been admitted at all in an English court of law. Accounts of fears expressed by Perrot himself; accounts of what the little girl had said, re-told by three of her little school friends. These three children, aged respectively 12, 13, and 10, were approached by the President with all that facile but sincere paternity of manner which comes so naturally and charmingly to a Frenchman. He *tutoyéd* them,

holding their hands and encouraging them to speak the truth and not be afraid. The first child, Marie Corlay, recounted how Emilie had often described to her how miserable it was at home because her mother couldn't bear her father. The second, Desirée Cortel, remembered how Emilie had described being awakened by the sound of the shot which had killed her father, and how it had been followed by the sound of the door opening and shutting ; and the last child, little Jeanne Cortel, repeated what Emilie had once said to her—" Maman can't sleep at night since she killed papa." Questioned as to this by the President, the accused woman remained perfectly unperturbed and simply answered : " My little girl must have made a mistake ; she must have meant to say that her father tried to kill me before he killed himself."

Then followed accounts of quarrels between old Madame de Quérangal and her daughter, one taking place on the day following Perrot's death, when Aimée had refused to give her money to spend in drink ; accounts, too, of vague threats and accusations made by Madame Quérangal, when she was drunk, against her daughter. One day the old lady was overheard to say to her daughter : " It was unlucky for poor Marc Perrot that you inherited that money ; he was old and ugly and you wanted to buy a young husband with it." And on the day of Aimée's second wedding, to which she was not invited, Madame Quérangal remarked that it was " a murderer's marriage," and forced her way into

the dance that followed to say to her daughter with a laugh " Well, well, there you are with a new husband, only this one will be harder to kill than the other was." What that old harridan could have told had she only chosen to unlock those firmly compressed lips!

After this cloud of witnesses, which might more truly have been termed a fog, came the medical witnesses for the prosecution. The first was Dr. Fortmorel, who was the doctor of the accused woman, but who declared that he thought it impossible Perrot could have committed suicide —a conclusion in which he was confirmed by Dr. Buffé and by M. Ourradour, a gunsmith. On the other hand, Dr. Lefeuvre, a professor of anatomy, cited for the defence, was of the opinion that it might indeed have been a case of suicide. At this point, Perrot's great bed, that huge cupboard-like contraption of the Bretons, was borne into the courtroom, and once again the obliging gendarme took his place in it to represent the dead man. Once again Aimée also stretched herself upon that tragic couch, but the arrangement did not at first quite meet with satisfaction. The gendarme did not take quite the correct attitude of the dead husband, whereupon Aimée, sitting up on the bed, came to his help and arranged him to her satisfaction, saying contentedly, " There, that's right." It was the last grotesque touch in this most grotesque of cases.

There followed the speeches for the prosecution and the defence, both somewhat of an

anticlimax to such a picturesque affair, for although morally there can have been, and can be, little doubt as to the guilt of this murderous sister of a murderous brother, there was no atom of proof—nothing but a mass of gossip and scandal, the truth of which could not be substantiated. There is very rarely anything but circumstantial evidence in a case of murder, but circumstantial evidence is perfectly good and sound ; however, in this case there was none even of that. The defence, of course, seized on this weakness of the prosecution, and made great play with the fact that the bad morals of the accused woman should not be made to press against her in such a charge. After a short deliberation, the jury returned a verdict of " Not guilty," and Aimée Roussel was immediately set at liberty.

Of her future life one can but conjecture. Probably it was no more unpleasant or difficult for her than before, for the fear in which the very name of her race inspired the countryside was not likely to have been lessened by her trial and acquittal. She and her mother presented a spectacle not uncommon in certain crimes—the spectacle of women so strong of character, even in their ill-doing, that nothing shakes them. The woman Simon also belonged to this remarkable category, and it is the picture presented of these undaunted women urging weak men to the ends they had appointed for them which makes the story of this degenerate family so remarkable a one. Young Aimé Quérangal had given way to weakness after the crime to which

he had been urged ; Simon had continued to drink himself stupid instead of defending himself from his wife, even though he suspected her and saw what she had in store for him ; Perrot, good fellow enough according to his lights, had yet stayed on in mortal fear of his wife till he met his death at her side, whether by his own hand or hers or another's. And that other, if other there were, had also been urged by this remorseless and terrible woman. They are not an amiable spectacle, the members of this Quérangal family and their intimates, but at least there is something solid and hard about the women, which is preferable to the driven sheep-like attitude of the men. Sometimes, in murders of elimination, it is the weak who through their very fear are constrained to remove the strong who bear upon them, but in this intricate fabric of sinister happenings, it was the strong who deliberately removed the weak, either by their own hands or the hands of still weaker instruments ; and it was only one man, young Aimé Quérangal, who suffered for whatever of guilt there was in this series of eliminations.

§ IV

The Murder from Jealousy

MRS. PEARCEY

THERE can never have been a case more remarkable for the mass of rumours, which immediately arose and persisted around it, than this of the murder of one woman by another. The intensely personal nature of the conflict between the two women—I am alluding to the mental and moral conflict which existed between them before it found physical expression—and the sordid nature of the surroundings, combined to give a Zolaesque atmosphere to the whole affair. Mrs. Pearcey must have been a woman not unlike Thérèse Raquin in remorselessness, eaten up with her own desires, and with all the persistence of a one-ideaed animal with its nose on the trail. She was a highly superior criminal to Thérèse Raquin, in that had she been able to conceal the traces of her crime there is no reason to doubt she would not have allowed it to interfere with her enjoyment of its advantages. She was that very rare thing in nature—an entirely unscrupulous human being. As a criminal, she was foolish and clumsy, but it was not the force which had carried her through that failed her, it was simply her planning capacity.

It was no wonder that, simultaneously with the discovery of the crime, legends should have sprung up around her figure. The rumour even

arose that the notorious Jack the Ripper had been at work in the locality, and though this was quickly disproved, yet the violence and horror associated with the crime was such as to make it understandable how the rumour arose in the first place.

Even in the earliest paragraphs which announced the discovery of the crime several false statements were suggested.

On Friday, 24th October, 1890, the body of a woman was found in Crossfield Road, Hampstead. A young man who lived in Belsize Park, close at hand, was passing through Crossfield Road about seven in the evening when he saw the figure of a woman lying on the ground. Crossfield Road was then in the process of construction ; it was in a quiet and somewhat aristocratic neighbourhood and the last place where anyone would have expected to have found a drunken woman, but it was the young man's first, and quite natural, thought that this woman whom he saw upon the ground must be drunk. He had gone on a few paces when it occurred to him she might be ill, and he turned back. It was a dark night, but, as he stooped down, he could distinguish that the woman's head was wrapped up in some woollen garment, and her immobility told him that here was not a case of either drunkenness or illness. He went at once to the Swiss Cottage Police Station and brought back a constable. The constable, finding no signs of life, blew on his whistle for assistance and, meanwhile, a doctor who had been called made

a hasty examination in the light of the bull's-eye lantern. He found that the woman's head was nearly severed from her body, only being attached by a small piece of skin at the back. " She was," said the earliest report, " tolerably well-dressed " —a remarkable concession considering that it is apparently part of the ritual of similar journalistic reports to say that a body is always well-dressed, just as a murdered girl is always beautiful and women spectators at a trial are always " fashionable." This woman was dressed plainly but with great cleanliness and neatness in her underwear, and was apparently of the lower middle class. At first it was stated that the body was that of a woman who was known to be in the habit of walking up and down Eton Avenue, and was a far from reputable character.

Next day it was discovered that the corpse was that of a " highly respectable married woman," to use the newspaper cliché of the period—a Mrs. Phœbe Hogg.

Meanwhile, a cabman stated that he was hailed at about the time of the murder by a well-dressed man, who told him to drive to Chalk Farm as quickly as he could and that he would give him double fare ; this he paid him and ran down the steps of the station ; and this perfectly innocent occurrence, which probably had for its solution a gentleman who thought he was going to be late for dinner with friends, roused quite a little excitement.

Already two rumours had arisen and died in connection with the case ; with the discovery of

the identity of the body, the truth began to step in.

Phœbe Hogg lived with her husband, their child, his mother, and his sister in Prince of Wales' Road, Kentish Town—that sordid locality which, rather surprisingly, lies near Regent's Park and St. John's Wood. On Friday, 24th October, Phœbe Hogg had gone out, taking with her in a " bassinette perambulator " her little eighteen months old girl. Clara Hogg, her sister-in-law, saw her leave at about three o'clock in the afternoon and, except for the woman whom Phœbe had gone to visit, Mrs. Pearcey, and one or two people who saw what must have been Phœbe at Mrs. Pearcey's door, no one ever saw her alive again.

Phœbe Hogg was identified owing to a newspaper report published on Saturday. Her husband, who came home on the Friday, did not worry unduly about her absence, because her father was very ill at Chorley Wood, and he concluded she had gone to see him ; but on Saturday morning, when he went there to hear her news and fetch her back, he found she had never gone.

Meanwhile, his mother and sister read in Saturday's paper an account of the finding of the body of a murdered woman, in Crossfield Road, and they knew that Eton Avenue, which is close at hand, was a thoroughfare that Phœbe would have passed through either if she had been going to visit a niece of hers at St. John's Wood, or if she had been travelling to Chorley Wood from

Swiss Cottage station. The description of the clothing—a black jacket, trimmed with imitation astrachan, and a black hat and dress, the undergarments marked P. H.—corresponded with what Phœbe had been wearing when she left Prince of Wales' Road the afternoon before. Clara Hogg read the account to her brother when he returned from his fruitless journey to Chorley Wood, and he told Clara to go to Mrs. Pearcey to make enquiries. It is noteworthy that he did not go himself, and later on he admitted that he had let himself in to Mrs. Pearcey's house, with the latch-key she had given him, the night before.

It is impossible at this lapse of time and without intimate knowledge of all the persons involved, to make more than a guess at what was in Clara Hogg's mind as she went along to the house of Mrs. Pearcey. As the investigations proceeded, it became obvious that the household at Prince of Wales' Road was divided against itself—the Hogg family in one camp and Phœbe Hogg alone in the other, only supported from outside by her sister, Martha Styles, a domestic servant at Egham and her niece, Elizabeth Styles, who was also in service, in St. John's Wood. Frank Hogg, the husband, worked for his brother who was a prosperous furniture remover. He left his wife as usual on Friday morning when he went to work, and did not come in till late at night, when he found a line written by his wife, saying that his dinner was in the saucepan. Frank Hogg's character comes extremely

badly out of the proceedings, although there is not the smallest imputation that he was in any way privy to the murder or anything but horrified at its commission. He seems to have been one of those men with the fatal faculty of unleashing in women a violence of feeling which it becomes impossible to guide or control. He was referred to at the trial, not only by counsel but by the judge, as " the man Hogg," which is not a sympathetic way of referring to a bereaved husband.

The apparently united little family at Prince of Wales' Road was in reality a little country in a state of civil war. Phœbe Styles had not been married by Frank Hogg until she was three months gone with child. Frank Hogg denied in the subsequent proceedings that his intimacy with Mrs. Pearcey was pre-marital, but it seems permissible to doubt the truth of this statement ; that Phœbe had been made suspicious and miserable about the intimacy during her year of married life, there is no doubt at all. Certain it is, also, that the Hogg family must have been sufficiently aware of the intimacy which bound together Frank, Phœbe and Mrs. Pearcey in an intense and tragic triangle, for Clara to have gone straight there without protest when she realised that the body found in Crossfield Road was probably that of her sister-in-law. It is also clear that Clara was on far more friendly terms, whatever her suspicions as to her brother's conduct, with Mrs. Pearcey than she was with her sister-in-law ; and it needed the shock of the

crime to show the Hogg family in what an untoward direction they had allowed their sympathies to stray.

From the time of the discovery of the body in Crossfield Road, the detectives had held the theory that no murder had actually been committed there, for there was very little blood spilt about the place, nothing in comparison with what would have been found if the actual severing of the head during life had occurred on that spot. The fact that, on the Friday night, an empty perambulator, saturated with still-wet blood, was found by a police constable in Hamilton Terrace, St. John's Wood, and that on Sunday morning Oliver Smith, a hawker, found on some building land on Finchley Road, the dead body of a baby, all conduced to the theory that mother and child had been murdered in some house and then deposited by some person or persons at the spots where they were found.

The unfortunate Frank Hogg—for unfortunate, however careless and callous a philanderer he may have been, he undoubtedly was—could have had no hope, from the moment he knew of the murder of his wife and the finding of the perambulator, that his child still lived.

Early on Saturday, therefore, the situation was, that the body of the woman had not yet been identified as that of Phœbe Hogg ; or the perambulator identified as being her property ; that the child was still missing, and that there was at the moment no special reason for suspecting any particular person as the murderer.

After Frank Hogg had been home and found his dinner in the saucepan on the Friday night, he had, so he said, let himself into number 2, Priory Street, gone through the dark passage, where there was no light, into the back parlour, where a lamp was burning—the back parlour, it may be mentioned, was used by Mrs. Pearcey as a bedroom. Mrs. Pearcey was out, and he took an envelope off the mantelpiece and wrote on it : " Twenty past ten, cannot stay." It had been arranged between them that if he found a light in the back room it would mean she would not be home till late. He did not go into any other room, and saw nothing to attract his attention or make him think that anything unusual had occurred, and he went straight home.

He was probably more uneasy about his wife's absence than he admitted, for he did not undress, but lay down in his clothes. It may have been the consciousness of his guilty connection with Mrs. Pearcey that made him send his sister, instead of himself, there on Saturday, for, it must be repeated, there is no proof that Frank Hogg suspected for a moment that any sinister suggestion there might be about his wife's disappearance implicated his mistress, yet it may well have been that the first uneasy breath of suspicion blew across his mind that day.

For it is a curious fact about Phœbe Hogg, as it is about so many people who are foully done to death, that she had a suspicious fear of the human being who was to inflict that death. As Palmer's almost hypnotised victims had done, so

Phœbe apparently realised in some dim way, perhaps with the dim suspicion of an animal, that she could not trust herself too completely in the power of the woman she knew as Mrs. Pearcey. About three weeks before the murder, Phœbe Hogg received one of the mysterious notes from Mrs. Pearcey that the latter was in the habit of sending her, asking her to go and meet her at a public house, and when she got there Mrs. Pearcey invited her to go with her for an excursion to Southend to look over an empty house she was thinking of taking. Phœbe Hogg declined the proposition, and remarked to her sister: "If I'd gone to Southend no one would have thought of looking out for me out there in an empty house." This, at least, was the evidence of her sister and niece, who were honest-looking, pleasant-faced women, both sincerely attached to her.

Yet, on the surface of it, it was Phœbe Hogg who had the advantage of Mary Eleanor Pearcey. Both had obviously cared for Frank Hogg sufficiently to give themselves to him; it was Phœbe whom, driven by the accident of conception, he had married, and who now lived with him entrenched, as it were, in the sanctity of the family. Phœbe was a personable woman, though, like her killer, she belonged to the horse-faced type, having a longish countenance; but she had the beautiful combination of wavy black hair and very blue eyes. Mrs. Pearcey had the advantage in age; she was about twenty-four at the time of the crime, whereas Phœbe Hogg was thirty-one. Phœbe had the advantage

of being the mother of Hogg's child; Mrs. Pearcey had the advantage of being forbidden fruit. She was an adventure; Phœbe was the penalty of carelessness. Mrs. Pearcey was also not without her claims to good looks. She had rather a sallow skin, but she had beautiful, russet-coloured hair, which was parted down the middle and worn Madonna-wise over her ears; she could have been said to have had a Madonna face were it not that her eyes—blue like those of her victim—were too close together, and that her upper lip lifted a trifle too sharply beneath her abrupt nostrils, showing perpetually the line of her pointed teeth. She was a big-boned young woman, tall and strong, whereas Phœbe Hogg had been suffering from an internal disease for some time and was weak and wasted. Had Mrs. Pearcey been born in a higher stratum of society, she might have made great play with the pose of *grande amoureuse*; as it was, she was the sordid Venus of a back street in Kentish Town, and probably, had she lived, would have gone down the steps trodden by nearly all the members of her profession—steps that lead to the street. As it was, Mrs. Pearcey, although she had no right to the title Mrs., had not done badly for her twenty-four years, and was in receipt of a small, but regular income—and of the gentleman who paid it—upon one day per week, at the same time that Frank Hogg was her *amant de coeur*.

Frank Hogg and his wife had quarrelled many times since the marriage. They fell out on two

accounts: first, that he did not approve of the visits of her sister and niece, considering that she complained unduly to them, and secondly, that she received letters of which she would not confide the contents to him. It is a curious and rather awful fact that it is more than probable that these letters which she denied to her husband were written to her by Mrs. Pearcey. To one reading all the facts brought together from all sides, there seems no doubt that, mingled with her profound distrust and suspicion of Mrs. Pearcey, was the pathetic eagerness and anxiety of a wife, fearful, and yet determined to find out exactly how much truth might lie behind her dread, and what it was in her supplanter that captivated her husband beyond any charm that she herself was able to exert.

In the February of the year of Phœbe's death she had been very ill—a miscarriage said the Hogg family, a miscarriage to which she would not admit; lack of proper food and positive maltreatment said the Styles family. In either case, it is a fact that Mrs. Pearcey came to the Hogg household where, at the time, Frank Hogg, only being in irregular work, was much at home —and nursed the wife and even provided little luxuries for her out of her own money. It is easy to say that even at this period, Mrs. Pearcey was bent on Phœbe Hogg's destruction, and it may even be accurate to say so, but that is a point on which we cannot be certain. Of all the strange phenomena with which the fabric of the world presents us, there is none so strange as

the human heart. It may quite well have been, and perhaps it is not unlikely, that Mrs. Pearcey would genuinely feel an impulse of kindliness towards her future victim at that period ; that in her lax conception of how human relationships could be arranged, she may have seen a ray of hope in the idea that she could arrange a genuine friendship with Phœbe and at the same time carry on her intrigue with Phœbe's husband.

In those days, before the law allowed a prisoner to go into the witness box, trials were at once more and less interesting ; more, in that the figure of the accused was bound to remain wrapped in the impenetrable mystery that surrounds every human being whose lips are sealed ; less, in that it is in the witness box that truth is almost invariably compelled or impelled out of the accused—there is no other such way of forcing the truth.

Mrs. Pearcey must remain to us for ever somewhat of an enigmatic figure. She was the victim of the impulse of " love," as that term is used in the Police Court ; but it would be more possible to sympathise with her had Frank Hogg been unique, instead of being one in a more or less paying crowd. Mrs. Pearcey lost her right to any claim on Frank Hogg when she accepted money from another man, and, consequently, lost even that dubious right to strike which some people maintain " love " bestows.

On the Saturday, then, we see Clara Hogg, who had never been, as she admitted, on good

terms with her sister-in-law, and had been quite a good friend of Mrs. Pearcey's for several years, arrive at the house in Priory Street. In trying to realise what was in Clara Hogg's mind, we must remember to make allowance for the fact that no one can easily admit the possibility of such a strange and unnatural happening as murder in their own circle. The reader has only to place himself in the position of being informed of any friend of his, however odd that friend may be, having suddenly murdered some other member of his acquaintance, to see with what an onslaught such an accusation strikes upon his soul. "These things," says human nature to itself, "don't happen; they aren't done." We all know that there are such things as railway accidents, murders and outrages of all sorts; but they happen in the papers, they don't happen to us and to the people whom we know.

There is no reason to suppose for a moment that any suspicion of Mrs. Pearcey beset the minds either of Frank Hogg or of his sister Clara on that Saturday morning. But it is not unlikely that, without anything as definite as suspicion having crystallised, a sudden recognition of dread possibilities in their friend may have knocked at their consciousness for the first time.

Clara Hogg arrived at the little house in Kentish Town—number 2, Priory Street, a flat-faced house of yellow brick, three stories in height and without a basement. It is a short street, mean and sordid in appearance, and runs

down to Priory Place, where at the left a railway arch spans the exit. Mrs. Pearcey owned the ground floor of this house, and so cleverly conducted herself there that she was looked on as a most respectable person.

Mrs. Pearcey herself opened the door to Clara, who promptly asked her whether she had seen Phœbe the day before. Mrs. Pearcey replied in the negative, but Clara—that uncertain something, which was not yet strong enough to be called suspicion, still pricking at her—asked the question again. Mrs. Pearcey then admitted that she had seen her. By now, both women were in the bedroom, that Frank Hogg had called the back parlour. Mrs. Pearcey, with a great appearance of frankness, suddenly gave way: "Well, as you press me," she said, "I will tell you. Phœbe did come at about five o'clock and asked me if I would mind baby a little while. I refused, and she then asked me if I would lend her some money. I said I could not, as I had only 1s. 1½d. in my purse, but I said she could have the 1s. if she liked. I did not tell you before because Phœbe asked me not to let anybody know that she had been here."

This statement struck Clara as being extremely unlikely, for Phœbe was never known to borrow money. Mrs. Pearcey explained that Phœbe did not wish her husband to know that she had been forced to borrow, for fear he might think it reflected on him.

Clara urged her friend to come with her to the mortuary, to see if the body which was there

was really, as she feared, that of Phœbe. It was natural enough Clara should not wish to go such a grisly errand by herself; but it is not uninteresting to speculate on what the feelings of Mrs. Pearcey must have been as she saw herself unable to refuse—she may even have been willing, caught by that queer impulse which drags murderers towards their victims or towards the scenes of their crimes.

The French quite candidly use the confrontation of the suspect with the murdered body as a test of guilt. This is not allowed by English law, and Mrs. Pearcey's is the only case which the writer can recollect, since that of Catherine Hayes, when a murderess was perforce brought into the presence of her victim. Together the two women repaired, first to the Police Station, where Clara Hogg stated that her sister-in-law was missing, and then on to the mortuary in the company of Sergeant Nursey.

There, even Mrs. Pearcey's iron nerves showed signs of breaking down, which only goes to prove what an excellent test the "ordeal by touch" must have been. The face of the dead woman was unrecognisable from blood, but Clara Hogg declared that the clothes were those of her sister-in-law. Mrs. Pearcey kept on clutching at Clara Hogg, saying: "Come away, it isn't her." Clara Hogg obstinately continued to examine the clothing, and declared that it belonged to her sister-in-law. Detective Inspector Bannister said to them, believing they were both relations of the dead woman: "Surely

if she is a relative and you have been living together, you can form a reliable opinion whether that is the person or not." He then took them back into the mortuary to look at the body again, and again Mrs. Pearcey clutched hold of Clara and dragged her away; but this time Clara said sharply: "Don't drag me." Bannister then asked them to stand on one side while Dr. Bond washed the face, which was heavily coated with dry blood. The livid features of Phœbe at once stood up clearly, the black hair tangled away from the forehead, eyes closed and the mouth half-open, while from the chin to the very back of the neck, there was nothing but a reddened mass of tissues. Clara Hogg, of course, identified the body at once, and, for the third time, Mrs. Pearcey tried to pull her away, and again Clara said, "Don't drag me"; and Bannister, thinking that the hysterical woman was trying to upset the calm and collected woman, added: "Don't drag her about, she can bear it if you leave her alone."

Already there had dawned in his mind a suspicion of the woman who acted so strangely. He put both women into a cab and sent them with a sergeant to the Portland Town Police Station to see the perambulator which had been taken there. Clara Hogg identified it, and the police went on with the two women to Prince of Wales' Road.

From there they went back to Hampstead Police Station, taking with them, in addition,

Frank Hogg. By this time the police had discovered that all was not well in the personal relations of these three people. Frank Hogg was searched, and the key of Mrs. Pearcey's rooms was found upon him. Inspector Bannister told Mrs. Pearcey that he considered it desirable to search her lodgings, to which she replied that she had not the slightest objection, but said that she would like to go with him. Thereupon the Inspector sent Mrs. Pearcey with two constables to Priory Street, keeping Frank and Clara Hogg at the Police Station.

The discoveries the officers made at Priory Street were of such a startling nature that they wired to Inspector Bannister to join them, which he accordingly did. At number 2, Priory Street, he found a state of affairs which justified his gravest suspicions. The walls and even the ceiling of the kitchen were spattered with blood, the poker had blood and hairs upon it; the carving knife found in a dresser drawer was stained with blood, a black skirt and an apron had marks of blood—the latter apparently having been lately washed. A pair of curtains stained with blood and a rug were found in a bath in the washhouse and the kitchen fender was much blood-stained. In a bonnet box in the bedroom was discovered a card case, and in it a card of Frank Hogg's—a curious little affectation for a working man, and one which he said dated from the days when he had attended the Polytechnic. Two panes of glass in the kitchen were broken and some were blood-stained. The hearthrug

was saturated with paraffin, as though somebody had been trying to clean it.

Mrs. Pearcey remained quite unmoved while all this examination was going on. She sat in a chair in her sitting-room, whistling. Sir Melville Macnaghten, in his book of reminiscences, *Days of My Years*, declares that she actually played the piano, and that when one of the officers asked her what she had been doing to get the kitchen into such a state, she chanted in reply: "Killing mice, killing mice, killing mice!" Whether she whistled or played the piano, she certainly made the statement about killing mice, and becomes with that phrase a legendary figure, a sort of malevolent incarnation of the famous farmer's wife. One can see Mrs. Pearcey, fierce and pale instead of round and rosy like the traditional countrywoman, pursuing blind mice round and round her kitchen, hacking at them with her carving knife.

Inspector Bannister cross-questioned the other people living in the house, and obtained from them confirmation of the fact that Mrs. Pearcey had had a visitor on the previous day and that a bassinette perambulator was blocking up the passage. He then took Mrs. Pearcey into custody, charging her with the wilful murder of Mrs. Hogg and on suspicion of murdering Mrs. Hogg's missing baby. Mrs. Pearcey declared that she was incapable of hurting anything, and went quietly with the officers. On the way to the Police Station in the cab, Inspector Bannister told her to take off her gloves, and when she did

so he saw that her hands were badly scratched, and that she was wearing two wedding rings, one of gold and one of brass.

Later there was much talk about the gold wedding ring, and it was suggested that it had belonged to Phœbe Hogg, though this was never proved, Frank Hogg himself denying it. But Phœbe Hogg's body when found had no wedding ring upon the hand, though her finger bore the impression of a wide ring which fitted the one taken from Mrs. Pearcey. However, John Charles Pearcey who, as it will be seen, had no cause to love the prisoner, declared that the ring was her own, and he had often seen her wearing it.

At the Police Station, where she was searched, it was found her clothes were stained with blood, and they had to be taken from her and clothing from the workhouse supplied.

The body of the child was discovered on a piece of waste land near the Finchley Road on Sunday morning, and was removed to Hampstead mortuary, where it was identified by Frank Hogg ; but there were no marks of violence on the little body, only a few abrasions upon cheek and chin, which might have been caused by its having been tipped out on to the earth. The child which was a fine, well-nourished little creature, evidently very well cared for by its mother, had died either from suffocation or exposure.

From then onwards—at the inquest, the Police Court proceedings and the trial, detail after

detail about the life led by this little group of people came to light. The reporters, too, were busy with interviews with members of both families, and though it is wise to take all such descriptive writing with a reserve of caution, some interesting little sidelights were thrown upon the three camps involved—that of the Hogg family, that of the Styles family and that of Mrs. Pearcey.

It transpired that Mrs. Pearcey had never married, and that her real name was Mary Eleanor Wheeler. She had—so it was declared—at one time been married to a Mr. Creighton, but it was soon shown that Creighton was the man who was supporting her at the time. He seems to have been, not unnaturally, rather timid about his association with her, although he was able to establish a complete alibi himself, and there was never any suspicion attached to him. He was a man of independent means in a fairly good position, and he had often heard Mrs. Pearcey speak of the Hoggs. He seems to have been alarmed at once and fairly certain of his friend's guilt, and he wisely went straight to the police to tell them what he knew, which did not amount to much. Mrs. Pearcey, in writing to him the Thursday before the crime, in a letter which began " Dearest Charlie " and was addressed to a post office some three or four miles from his house (it will be seen what a cautious gentleman Mr. Creighton was) told him she was just going round to Prince of Wales' Road. On the Friday he replied to her letter by

sending her one containing money, also from a post office in a different district from that in which he resided, but he did not come up to town himself as he was ill at the time.

A newspaper correspondent interviewed Miss Hogg, and asked her whether Mrs. Pearcey was an intimate friend of her family. Clara replied that they had known her for about four years and had always been friendly, and said she had never seen Mrs. Pearcey display any feeling of enmity or hatred towards Mrs. Hogg, in fact that Mrs. Pearcey had nursed Phœbe through her illness the previous Christmas. This all sounded very well, but Clara added, " Whatever motive Mrs. Pearcey had, unless it were jealousy, I can't think," thereby giving away the fact that she knew of the relations between her brother and her friend.

During this interview Frank Hogg, who was upstairs, put his head over the banisters and asked in a voice choked with sobs : " What's the matter ? " Clara replied that some reporters were endeavouring to clear up one or two doubtful points, and Mr. Hogg sobbed out : " I suppose you've heard that they have found the poor little baby ? " and then disappeared, convulsed with grief.

Clara declared in court that Phœbe had left the house in Prince of Wales' Road quite happily on the Friday afternoon, pushing with her in a perambulator the little girl. Mrs. Hogg, Frank's mother, was also unable to assign any motive for the murder of her daughter-in-law,

and said that except for a " few tiffs " now and then, her son and his wife lived on good terms. The landlord and landlady of the house in Prince of Wales' Road, however, stated that there were frequent quarrels between Frank and Phœbe, and that he had forbidden her niece the house and told them that if she called again to see his wife, they were to refuse to let her in, to which they very properly replied that they could not do that if she asked for Mrs. Hogg. They both said that Phœbe was, to use their own expression, very " well-conducted " and very neat, and that she did not go out on Friday afternoon in any offhand manner or as though she were offended about anything. She was wearing her gold wedding ring and carried a purse containing 2s., so it seems unlikely that she would have tried to borrow money from Mrs. Pearcey, as the latter had stated.

Frank Hogg had to admit his intimacy with Mrs. Pearcey. He stated that it began soon after his marriage to the unfortunate Phœbe, and that he was in the habit of visiting Mrs. Pearcey several times a week. He said that his wife also was extremely friendly with Mrs. Pearcey until about eight months earlier, when he and Phœbe had quarrelled because she would not show him some letters which she had received. These were probably the letters which it was afterwards discovered Mrs Pearcey had been in the habit of sending to the wife of the man she loved. Frank declared that since the quarrel he and his wife had lived happily together, that though he

had visited Mrs. Pearcey once or twice a week, he had been under the impression that his wife had never seen her since, and if it were true his wife visited Mrs. Pearcey on the day of her death, he simply couldn't understand it. He added that Mrs. Pearcey always spoke to him "very kindly" about his wife. The idea of happiness entertained by people of the Hogg mentality is not very high, and hence it is quite likely that in their eyes Frank and Phœbe were a happy couple; perhaps it was a household where, as long as people were not actively abusing each other or throwing things about, content was presumed to reign.

In spite of Frank's surprise at the notion of his wife visiting Mrs. Pearcey, there soon remained no shadow of a doubt that she had done so. A note—one of those mysterious notes about which there had been so much trouble, had arrived for Phœbe on the Thursday, the day before the murder, and she showed it to her sister, Martha Styles. The note was from Mrs. Pearcey and said: "Dearest: come round this afternoon and bring our little darling, don't fail." Mrs. Hogg had been unable to go that day; but it appeared that Mrs. Pearcey had prepared some very curious arrangements. She had drawn down the blinds of her house, and to account for this proceeding concocted a story to the effect that her young brother, a boy of fourteen, had just died.

Oddly enough, the person to whom Mrs. Pearcey made this statement was the man from

whom she had derived her name and courtesy title—the young carpenter called John Charles Pearcey who had at one time—when she was eighteen or nineteen years of age, lived with her, when she had passed as Mrs.Pearcey. He had not lived with her for two years since or visited her, though he had often seen her. The dark cardigan jacket, in which the head of the victim was wrapped, belonged to him and he had left it at Mrs. Pearcey's. On the Thursday, he was passing Number Two, Priory Street, when he saw the woman standing at the gate, and though there was bad blood between them—it seems she had sickened him by her infidelities—he stopped to ask her why the blinds were drawn down : probably from a friendly motive of sympathy. She told him a brother of hers, only fourteen years old, was dead and that the funeral was to be on Tuesday. Pearcey was a decent young fellow, only five or six and twenty years old, fresh-coloured and clean-looking. He told briefly how he had decided to leave her and had cleared out, and when he was asked whether he knew how she lived, replied in accents of unmistakable bitterness, " She said she was being provided for by a gentleman whom she called her husband." " You are not on good terms with the prisoner ? " asked Mr. Freke Palmer, who was the prisoner's solicitor. " Decidedly not " replied Pearcey promptly. He only asked that one question about the blinds, moved, perhaps, by a momentary stirring of kindly feeling towards the woman with whom he had once been so

intimate; and had passed on leaving Mrs. Pearcey—the woman who was by a queer turn of irony to make his name infamous—still standing at the gate of her blindfolded house—watching and waiting.

Phœbe Hogg did not come that day, and next morning Mrs. Pearcey sent another note by a lad called Holmes. No amount of cross-examination either at the Police Court or at the trial succeeded in shaking this boy. He was close to his own gate in Prince of Wales' Road, when, on the morning of the 24th—the Friday—a woman whom he identified as Mrs. Pearcey came up to him. She asked him if he would take a note for her and she gave it to him with a penny, and told him to take it to 141 in the same road and to ring the top bell. She impressed upon him to be sure to give the note to Mrs. *Frank* Hogg. He delivered the note and came back; Mrs. Pearcey then beckoned him towards her again and asked him if he had delivered the note all right. It does not appear whether Mrs. Pearcey had drawn the blinds down on Friday or not, but certain it is that the reason she had given for so doing in the first place had been merely an excuse and that no brother of hers or anyone that she knew was dead on the Thursday.

Phœbe Hogg, with her pretty little baby neatly dressed in its brown pelisse and beaver bonnet, tied with blue ribbons, left Prince of Wales' Road, and was never spoken to again except by Mrs. Pearcey herself. Of what their

conversation consisted we have no record. It is true that Mrs. Pearcey confided to a female searcher that Mrs. Hogg had come to tea with her about four o'clock and, to use Mrs. Pearcey's own expression : " As we were having tea, Mrs. Hogg made some remark which I did not like—one word brought up another." Here Mrs. Pearcey had, rather wisely, stopped, adding : " Perhaps I had better not say any more."

Exactly what happened at that sinister tea party before the fatal blow was struck, we shall never know ; whether Phœbe had gone to it timorously, which seems unlikely or else why should she have gone—or determined to show herself off as the triumphant wife, complete with offspring, or whether—as is most probable—that curious fascination and dread which Mrs. Pearcey seems to have had for her drew her there, we can never know. That she anticipated any danger was impossible or she would never have taken her child ; and indeed, how can she have thought of such a thing—going in daylight to take tea with a young woman of her acquaintance ?

Any of the three blows on the head would have been sufficient, so said the doctor, to cause unconsciousness, and let us hope that she was taken unawares from behind. The wound in the neck severed everything except the skin and some muscles at the back of the neck. The knife which inflicted this wound must have been very sharp and must have been drawn across the throat several times, and great force must have

been exerted in completely severing the vertebrae. All this butcher's work, therefore, might have been done after the victim was unconscious, but, alas, there were several bruises about the hands and wrists ; on the left arm a large bruise, as if she had put up her arm to defend herself, and on the right arm a jagged wound through the skin. It might perhaps have been that Phœbe was attacked from behind as she stood in the little kitchen, and that she had fallen forward hitting against the glass of the window and thus cut and bruised herself, but—there are always those scratches on Mrs. Pearcey's hands to be accounted for. It seems most likely, taking all the circumstances together, that Phœbe, though weakened by her abscess and by nursing her child, fought for her life with her muscular hostess.

A Mrs. Priddington, who lived next door to Mrs. Pearcey, had heard a smash of glass in the latter's house on Friday afternoon and the screaming of a child ; she had run into her garden trying to find out what was the matter ; she could not, however, see anything as the kitchen window of Number Two, Priory Street, was hidden by the dividing wall. She heard no more screams, and, everything becoming quiet, she concluded her neighbour had had an accident with some crockery and paid no more attention.

Other neighbours, too, had heard noises, and one man—a file cutter—said that when he was at work finishing some files in the back kitchen, he

and his wife were suddenly startled by a great noise. He said to his wife : " Whatever is that, is it something coming down or is it in Mrs. Pearcey's ? " As a public house was being repaired at the corner, he and his wife thought that something had fallen down there. They both ran out into their garden, and called out to see if Mrs. Pearcey was all right, but could not make anyone hear and went in again. It was obvious that the file cutter thought he had been overhearing a family row and as he afterwards said : " I have seen various gentlemen there and one in particular whom she represented as her husband. It is not a pleasant thing to interfere between a man and his wife, and though I thought the row was on there, we thought it best not to interfere. Mrs. Pearcey was always very ladylike and kind-speaking." He added that later on that night he heard a great deal of noise, more than ever before, like people walking about and cleaning up, and that the noise went on nearly all night, of people going in and out. The file cutter was convinced from the noise and the moving about that there were several people there. His memory, or his imagination, may have been sharpened by the fact that rumours of an accomplice were rife, and that the opinion was everywhere expressed that a young woman like Mrs. Pearcey was physically incapable of carrying through such a violent crime unaided.

Be that as it may, the police authorities came to the conclusion, apparently somewhat reluctantly, that they were not in a position to

make any further arrest and no such arrest was ever made. It is certainly possible that a friend —and a very near friend—of Mrs. Pearcey might have gone in that night, discovered the tragedy and, without having been in any way guilty in the actual commission of the act, been persuaded, half through fear and half through sympathy, to try and assist her in concealing it.

Sarah Butler, the wife of the labourer occupying the second floor, noticed a perambulator standing in the hall of the house as it had stood twice before when Phœbe Hogg had called there. On entering the house, she knocked into the perambulator, for the hall was in darkness, though Mrs. Pearcey generally kept a light there. Mrs. Pearcey had always told the Butlers a strange fiction about Phœbe Hogg—she had always said that she was her sister-in-law and that Frank Hogg was her brother. The man who went there every Monday was, said she, her father. When Butler came in a few minutes later, Mrs. Pearcey was in the hall and, as he put it, " handed him " past the perambulator. When he and his wife came down about an hour later, there was nothing in the passage. The Butlers must have come just in when Mrs. Pearcey was in the press of her work.

Whether she smothered the baby before setting out on her adventurous journey, or whether she employed it as an innocent piece of camouflage, perched on its mother's body, will never be known ; that the child took the ride—dead or alive—with its dead mother, we know.

A police inspector made the experiment of getting into the tiny little perambulator and being covered over and wheeled about, and it was found to be a perfectly possible thing to do. In the case of Phœbe Hogg, the matter was made easier by the fact that there was nothing to prevent the head being doubled right back.

It must be remembered that Kentish Town is one of those parts of London where women wheel washing about in large bundles in perambulators, and hence the sight even of a woman known to be childless wheeling a perambulator would arouse no comment.

Elizabeth Rogers, who lived in Priory Place, which runs across the end of Priory Street, was coming home on that Friday evening and, approaching the railway arch beneath which she had to pass, she met Mrs. Pearcey pushing a perambulator heavily laden. The load was higher under the hood than it was at the handle. The road inclines upwards under the railway arch, and Mrs. Pearcey seemed to be having a hard job of it to push the perambulator up-hill ; her head was drooped right over the handle. It was a cold dark night and Mrs. Rogers did not stop and speak to Mrs Pearcey, whom indeed she did not know by name, although she did mangling for her at irregular intervals. She, too, remarked that Mrs. Pearcey was always very quiet and ladylike.

Mrs. Rogers was the first person to see Mrs. Pearcey on her extraordinary and doleful journey through the dark and cold of that October night ;

but a Mrs. Gardiner was crossing the road from her house in the Prince of Wales' Road upon the fateful evening, and she also saw a woman wheeling a perambulator. She noticed that the perambulator was heavily laden and covered over with a black shawl and that the woman who pushed it seemed to be having some difficulty in getting it along. She identified the woman as Mrs. Pearcey, and saw her wheel the perambulator up the Prince of Wales' Road towards Haverstock Hill.

Did Mrs. Pearcey know of that bit of building land in Crossfield Road and was she deliberately aiming for it when she pushed her weary way towards it, or was she merely going blindly on, even past the very house where her victim lived, until by chance she came to what seemed to her a suitable spot in which to dispose of her burden ?

Through streets, some of which must have been crowded with evening shoppers, Mrs. Pearcey pushed that heavy perambulator with its bulging load all the way from Priory Road, Kentish Town, to Crossfield Road, Hampstead. There, amidst the rubble of building materials, she deposited the body of Phœbe and then pressed on for a mile to Finchley Road, and there shot out the child on to the piece of waste ground—dead or alive. From there she went on another mile to Hamilton Terrace, St John's Wood, where she abandoned the perambulator ; " And so home," as Mr. Pepys would say.

A brass nut which had fallen out of the perambulator in Crossfield Road was discovered by the

police and fitted into place when the perambulator was found.

A girl engaged at a West-end drapery house, who knew Mrs. Pearcey fairly well, was coming home down Gt. Portland Street at about eight o'clock that night when she saw, as she declared, Mrs. Pearcey standing there. She was exceedingly struck with her appearance; "I never saw her so untidy and dejected" was how she put it. The girl stood looking at her, unobserved by Mrs. Pearcey, wondering what could be wrong. Never before had she seen Mrs. Pearcey anything but nice and tidy and duly gloved; now her hat was on sideways, her hair was rough and her hands seemed dark with stains. She was standing looking rapidly from one side to the other, and so strange was her appearance that the girl said to the friend with her: "I know that person standing there, I think there must be something wrong with her." She hesitated, wondering whether she ought to go up and ask her if there were anything the matter, but then concluded she might have had something to drink and she had better not, so she walked off.

There is something epic about the extraordinary journey of this extraordinary woman; something that lifts her above the sordidness of her crime. The descriptions of the witnesses show one vivid little pictures of her bent figure, toiling along behind the laden perambulator, bent over the white china handle bar which was found stained and broken; so intent, she

recognised nobody whom she met. Going on; always on; till she found a place where she could tip out her burden unobserved; then—perhaps with some vague notion of making identification of the bodies more difficult—on again another mile where she abandoned the baby dead or alive; then on yet again a mile further where she left the battered perambulator. And then, to wander like a woman distraught—exhausted as she must have been physically—down to Gt. Portland Street, where she was seen standing on the flag-stones of the pavement—" on a dark flag-stone," said the girl who had seen her—one that she could point out again; and then home to work with frenzy throughout the night, washing and cleaning, re-arranging: all to no purpose.

It is natural to ask, what motive can have been strong enough to nerve Mrs. Pearcey's arm to such a deed? And to answer jealousy, seems to offer to a reasonable human being but an inadequate solution. Frank Hogg had never, at any time, suggested marrying her; indeed, he seems to have thought her a married woman, and she had received the news of his marriage quietly. She was being paid by another man, and paying him back in the recognised manner, and these two men did not make up the full complement of lovers. Yet upon Frank Hogg she seems to have poured a torrential affection, and her letters to him breathe a simplicity, one might almost say a purity of love, amazing in such a woman, whom it would be perhaps natural to

expect to find depraved even in the form and expression of her emotions. One of the letters to Frank is as follows :

" My dear F.—Do not think of going away, for my heart will break if you do ; don't go, dear. I won't ask too much, only to see you for 5 minutes when you can get away ; but if you go quite away, how do you think I can live ? I would see you married 50 times over—yes, I could bear that far better than parting with you for ever and that is what it would be if you went out of England. My dear loving F., you was so down-hearted to-day that your words give me much pain, for I have only one true friend I can trust to, and that is yourself. Don't take that from me. What good would your friendship be then, with you so far away ? No, no, you must not go away. My heart throbs with pain to only think about it. What would it be if you went ? I should die. And if you love me as you say you do, you will stay. Write or come soon, dear. Have I asked too much ? From your loving M.E. *P.S.*—I hope you got home quite safe, and things are all right, and you are well. M.E."

Later she wrote again:

" 18*th Oct.*, 1888.

" Dearest Frank,—I cannot sleep, so am going to write you a long letter. When you read this I hope your head will be much better, dear. I can't bear to see you like you were this evening. Try and not give way. Try to be brave, dear, for things will come right in the end. I know things look dark now, but it is always the darkest hour before the dawn. You said this evening, ' I don't know what I ask.' But I do know. Why should you want to take your life because you want to have everything your own way ? So you think you will take that which no man has a right ; never take that which you cannot give—you will not if you love me as

you say you do. Oh ! Frank, I should not like to think I was the cause of all your troubles, and yet you make me think so. What can I do ? I love you with all my heart, and I will love her because she will belong to you. Yes, I will come and see you both if you wish it. So dear, try and be strong, as strong as me, for a man should be stronger than a woman. Shall I see you on Wednesday, about 2 o'clock ? Try and get away too, on Friday, as I want to know if you are off on Sunday until 7 o'clock. Write me a little note in answer to this. I shall be out on Monday or Tuesday in the morning about 9 a.m. So believe me to remain your most loving,

M. E."

Frank Hogg denied that he had ever contemplated taking his own life, indeed he does not seem to have been the sort of man who would ever have risked himself in any way that he could avoid. But, on the other hand, he might quite likely have threatened to do so, so as to have the pleasure of being implored not to by his mistress. A couple of further letters were as follows :

" 2 Priory Street, Camden Town,
19*th Oct.*, 1888.

" Dear Frank,—You said, ' If you thought I loved you.' What did you mean by that ? Don't you know that I do ? How can I prove to you that I do love you very dearly ? If there is anything I can do to prove it, I promise you it shall be done. You have more power over me than anyone on earth. When I say that I say all. Do have a wee note for me when I come to-morrow. I hope you did not get into any bother. Good-night, Dear."

" 25*th Oct.*

" Dear Frank,—Thanks so much for the letter ; it was so good of you to send it. I am thinking how

selfish I am for asking you to come here to see me. Of course you don't want to be bothered with me ; but if you can come on Friday, I shall be very glad to see you, as I am afraid to come to the shop. I might make mischief, so to prevent it, I had better not come. People say ugly things sometimes, not nice to hear. So when I come into the shop again I shall be very careful, and especially if an inquisitive lady should come in—you know who I mean. Dear Frank, the time has been so long to-day ; every minute an hour of waiting for you. Do try and come on Friday. So good-bye till then, with good wishes from M. E. In this false world we do not always know who are our friends and who our enemies, and all need friends."

Frank Hogg said he could not think who the " inquisitive lady " might be, and denied that it was his wife.

These letters were written in the autumn of 1888, two years before the murder, so it seems unlikely that Frank Hogg's contention that there were no intimate relations between them at that date was true. Neither Mrs. Pearcey nor Frank Hogg was of the spiritual type of human being who could keep matters on such a plane as these letters might imply, did one take them only to suggest friendship. Later she wrote to him a less equivocal letter :

" Dear Frank,—You ask me if I was cross with you for coming only for such a little while. If you knew how lonely I am you would not ask. I would be more than happy if I could see you for the same time every day, dear. You know I have a lot of time to spare and I cannot help thinking. I think and think, till I get so dizzy that I don't know what to do with myself. If it was not for our love, dear, I don't know what I

should really do, and I am always afraid you will take that away, then I should quite give up in despair, for that is the only thing I care for on earth. I cannot live without it now. I have no right to it, but you gave it to me, and I can't give it up. Dear Frank, don't think bad of me for writing this. I do hope your cold will soon go away. Hoping to see you to-morrow, with love from your ever loving and affectionate, M. E. *P.S.*—Don't think anyone would know the handwriting."

Frank Hogg certainly found a warm welcome waiting for him when he paid his visits to Number Two, Priory Street; and at the same time he was outwardly a pillar of respectability and attended a place of worship regularly.

Hogg went to pieces badly over the murder and was an emotional witness. Mrs. Pearcey, on the other hand, remained the same calm, enigmatic figure that she had been all along; only occasionally a slight twitching of her mouth or her eyelids might have been observed, and when Frank was sobbing heavily in the witness box, she sat staring straight in front of her with her hands folded in her lap. Whenever she herself spoke, it was a thin, weak voice entirely devoid of emotion.

Had it only been possible for an accomplice—and that accomplice a man—to be ranged beside her in the dock, Mrs. Pearcey might, though it is not likely at that date, have escaped with her life. As it was, the trial ended in the way every one expected—with the sentence of death.

Her counsel, Mr. Hutton, used the stale old argument about the dangers of circumstantial evidence; but Mr. Justice Denham pointed out

that in cases of murder evidence was nearly always entirely circumstantial, for the simple reason that few people committed a murder with other people looking on.

Mr. Hutton declared that the young woman in the dock was of an affectionate and kindly disposition—but then, so apparently was Palmer, to say nothing of a great many other murderers.

It was impossible to shake the boy Holmes in his identification of the woman who had sent him with the note, or the evidence of the other lodgers in Priory Street as to the presence of the bassinette in the hall. It was obviously impossible to account for the presence of all the blood spattered over the kitchen by the fantastic explanation that Mrs. Pearcey had been "killing mice."

Mary Eleanor Wheeler, *alias* Pearcey, was sentenced to death, protesting her innocence of the crime; and the legends that had gathered about her did not cease with her removal from the dock. She herself, with that passion for making mysteries and romances which had caused her to be such a voluminous reader of novelettes, assumed now a mysterious attitude.

She said to the chaplain, just as she was being led to the scaffold: "The sentence is just; the evidence was false," which means precisely nothing.

She left a letter for Clara Hogg, absolving Frank from complicity in the murder. She expected a visit from him on the afternoon before the execution; but it is quite in keeping with

Frank's character that he did not turn up, and her disappointment is said to have been intense, though her remarkable composure still never deserted her.

To the last she assured her solicitor, Mr. Freke Palmer, of her innocence most solemnly, and desired to insert in the Madrid papers the following advertisement :

" M.E.C.P. Last wish of M.E.W. Have not betrayed."

The report went that she had told Mr. Palmer this message referred to a secret marriage that she had pledged herself never to reveal. If that were so, she certainly kept her word, as Mr. Palmer was unable to extract from her the date of the marriage or the name of the man whom she said first married and then deserted her. It would be interesting to know why Mrs. Pearcey selected Madrid as the place suitable for her mysterious communication ; perhaps she had been reading a novelette about a Spanish grandee, who can say ?

Whatever her secrets were, they were certainly of a far profounder nature than any romantic nonsense about a marriage with a man in Madrid, and she took them to the grave with her.

Frank Hogg, who was nearly lynched by the crowds, changed, one imagines, his place of residence and his mode of life ; and it is to be presumed he became more careful in his choice of the women he fascinated. He is a vulgar figure enough ; but there will always remain some-

thing mysterious about the two women—his wife and his mistress.

The apparently temperate and reasonable affection Mrs. Pearcey displayed for the man; the violent reaction of almost incredible passion which took hold of her, not suddenly, but so that she could deliberately plan and lead up to its expression; the queer, furtive, half-friendly relationship between her and Phœbe; these are the things which make the case so noteworthy.

It is said that a panther is far more ferocious than a lion and will follow its victim with infinite cunning through the jungle for hours, and even days, on end. Mary Eleanor Pearcey was a panther in the jungle of the shady underworld in which she lived, and she stalked Phœbe Hogg patiently and remorselessly, occasionally even leading her to think that she was, after all, a pleasant, sportive animal with whom it was safe to play. And when the moment came, she made her kill with the relentless ferocity and the insane butchery of the panther striking down its victim.

It is in the character of the murderess and the relationship between her and her victim that the real mysteries of the case lie.

§ V

Murder from Lust of Killing

NEILL CREAM

KILLING for killing's sake is an apparently motiveless motive. Yet this class is a wide and varied field. It is possible to distinguish two divisions, which we may call A and B.

In Division A come the murders where the satisfaction of lust is in the actual killing, without any sexual connection with the victim.

In Division B come the murders committed at the same time or directly after the sexual act, not for the purpose of concealing outrage—which would be a murder of elimination—but as part of the sexual gratification.

Occasionally, as in the case of the man known to the prostitutes of Vienna as "The Chicken Killer," a man may know of the tendency to murder, at this moment, within himself, and may arrange for its gratification more or less harmlessly. On the other hand, there is the case of Vidal, the French killer of women, who had a horror of blood, and could not kill a chicken himself, though he was a poultry merchant, and yet he murdered four women during his uncontrollable frenzies in the space of one month.

In the murders of Division A there is nearly always to be found a commingling of the power mania with the lust of killing; especially is this the case with the poisoners, and consequently

their crimes are more subtle in their motives than those which come into Division B.

Jegado, Van de Leyden and Zwanziger all suffered from power-mania. Feuerbach, the great Bavarian Judge, said of Zwanziger : " Her attachment to poison was based on the proud consciousness of possessing a power which enabled her to break through every restraint, to attain every object, to gratify every inclination, to determine the very existence of others."

This plain, elderly, wizened little woman saw herself as God with the power of life and death. Zwanziger had led an unsatisfactory, hand-to-mouth existence, profligate in a sordid way, until she discovered the power arsenic gave her. She conceived a veritable frenzy of love for it, calling it her " truest friend." She would " tremble with pleasure as she gazed upon the white powder with eyes beaming with rapture."

In time, says Feuerbach, the mixing and giving of poison became her constant occupation ; she practised it in jest and in earnest, and at last with real passion for poison itself, without reference to the object to which it was given.

Jegado was guilty of twenty-six poisonings and eight attempts between the years 1833 and 1851. For all that time this morally diseased servant-maid dealt out death as she chose. Once she had set her heart on any particular victim, she pursued him patiently and remorselessly and, in the majority of cases, she murdered without attempting to gain the least advantage for herself. Seven people died in three months in one house where

she worked, one of them her own sister. She nursed them all through their protracted agonies with great devotion, and after each death she would say, shaking her head sorrowfully: "This will not be the last. Wherever I go people die."

Jegado was very religious and attended Mass regularly.

Van de Leyden, between the years 1869 and 1885, attempted the lives of one hundred and two people, of whom twenty seven died. She was a professional nurse, attentive and kindly, and though she sometimes insured her victims for small sums, she killed mostly simply for love of killing. Amongst her victims were her father and mother, and three of her own children. To one man who was mourning the sudden death of a relative under her ministrations, she said, quietly: "It will be your turn in a month,"—and she duly carried our her prophecy.

Zwanziger, Jegado and Van de Leyden were all small, wizened and ugly, but they were women in whom lust was intensely strong, and their lust found gratification in the sense of power.

Marie Jeanneret, who was a young and good-looking woman, is an example of a killer who killed for pure love of power. She became a nurse merely to attain this power, and she was actually a loser by most of her crimes. Her psychology is summed up in a phrase she used towards a friend who was condoling with her on the bad luck which attended all her patients: "Ah, Madame," said Jeanneret, "but there are some beautiful moments in death. . . ."

Vacher, who committed many sadistic murders of children, was convinced that he had a sacred mission to punish sinners through the deaths of their offspring. He was a fine-looking, dark-bearded man who, in his white sheep-skin cap, had something of the look of an Arab. He had picked up a smattering of education and called himself a " modern Attila." He cut girls' throats at the supreme moment of violation, and spoke and wrote of himself after his arrest as " the instrument of Divine Vengeance." Vacher, though he falls into Division B, had something of the instinct for self-aggrandisement which takes the place of physical frenzy in the murderers of Division A.

Thomas Neill Cream comes undoubtedly both into Division A and Division B, for, though the sexual impulse and sadism were both concerned in his killings, his driving force was his mania for toying with power.

At the time when he lived and committed his crimes—the year 1892—he was quite simply considered to have murdered for gain, merely because he wrote fantastic letters to total strangers, demanding huge sums under a threat to blackmail them, after the commission of each murder. There is no evidence that he ever followed up these letters or tried to get into touch with the people to whom he had written them, and it seems that he was merely following his craving for causing talk, and being able to talk himself about the crimes which he had committed, which otherwise would have seemed dull and flat to

him. For this is a point which should be carefully noted in connection with murderers of this class. They talk wildly and injudiciously; in many cases if they could have kept silent, they would never have been suspected, but silence is no use to them. They must hear discussions about what they have done, even if they have to start those discussions themselves.

Neill Cream is a very pure example of this class of murderer, and his blackmailing was a clumsy expression of the craving for recognition of the act of killing.

The tale of the Cream killings is a tale of mean streets. In that drab neighbourhood which lies on the south side of the river round about Waterloo, lived the murderer and his victims. Stamford Street, Waterloo Road, a place of flat-faced, grimy houses that had seen better days, as their beautiful doorways and fanlights show; Lambeth Road, where the yellow bricks are dark with smoke; Duke Street, a little street of mean lodging houses; Westminster Bridge Road, and Lambeth Palace Road, whose lordly designation is given the lie by its appearance: these streets formed the theatre for the complicated and sordid drama of a strange lust which was unfolded before the horrified eyes of the 'Nineties. In strange, shabby little rooms, where a normal if a sordid desire was wont to take furtive seekers after "love" at night, lived the victims of the abnormal doctor with his bald head, his gold watch-chain, his shining silk hat, his crossed eyes behind their gleaming spectacles

and his mellifluous and innocent name of Cream.

Lodging houses of the baser sort have seen many strange dramas, many curious manifestations of human nature—and that peculiar smell as of many long-past dinners, oilcloth, shut windows and dusty plush, which greets the nostrils when the door is opened into any of these narrow hallways with their hat-stands and their mottled wall-papers, is perhaps an expression not only of these material causes but also of that inexpressibly fustian emotion which seems so often to have spent itself within such inauspicious walls.

In *The Times* for 13th April, 1892, there was tucked away an inconspicuous little paragraph stating that a police constable had been called into a house in Stamford Street, Waterloo Road, and there in the passage had found a girl, clad only in her night-dress, dying, apparently from the effect of some violent poison. In a room in the same house he found another girl, fully dressed, also apparently suffering in the same way. He took them to St. Thomas's Hospital, but Alice Marsh, the first girl, died on the way, Emma Shrivell, the second girl, expiring in great agony some time later. The paragraph went on to state that the two girls were supposed to have been poisoned by some tinned salmon they had taken a few hours earlier.

An inquest was held at St. Thomas's Hospital by Mr. Wyatt, the day-coroner for East Surrey. Constable Eversfield described how he had been fetched to the Stamford Street house and in what

condition he had found Alice Marsh and Emma Shrivell, and how Shrivell had told him that a "gentleman" had given each of them some "long pills," after which he had accompanied them home and stayed there until two o'clock in the morning. After he had left they ate some tinned fish which had made them extremely ill. She said that she had met this gentleman before, the only name she knew him by was Fred, and that he was very bald on the top of his head and wore spectacles and a silk hat.

The next witness was Inspector Lowe, who stated that he went to the house in Stamford Street and found a letter there from some man accepting an invitation to tea from the two girls. The house physician at St. Thomas's stated that Shrivell was already unconscious when she arrived at the hospital and suffering from attacks of convulsions. She was kept under the influence of chloroform for some time; directly it was taken from her she died. He had made a post mortem on the bodies of both girls, but found no sign of disease, and considered the symptoms were not consistent with ptomaine poisoning. In his opinion strychnine had been the cause of death. The enquiry was adjourned for an analysis to be made of the contents of the stomachs.

On Friday, 6th May, the inquest was resumed, but no further evidence was forthcoming until Mr. Thomas Stephenson, government analyst, was called. He stated that he had found traces of strychnine, and the jury returned a verdict that death in each case was due to strychnine

poisoning but that how it had been administered there was no evidence to show.

Here the question of these deaths might have rested for ever had it not been for the conduct of the murderer. On 13th October of the previous year, a girl called Ellen Donworth, of the class so justly termed " unfortunate," had been brought into St. Thomas's hospital dead. But before she had gone out on the evening that she met her death, Ellen had told a friend that she was going to meet a gentleman outside the York Hotel in the Waterloo Road, and that she had to give back to him the letter she had received from him making the appointment. She mentioned that this man was bald-headed and cross-eyed. An hour and a half later she was brought back dying by two men who had found her in the street. She gasped out that the man who had written the letter—" the tall, dark, cross-eyed fellow "—had given her some white stuff to drink out of a bottle. She died in great agony and the symptoms were consistent with strychnine poisoning.

The house surgeon made an analysis of the contents of the stomach and found some strychnine, about a quarter of a grain of which was unabsorbed. An inquest was held, but the police were without any clue and Ellen Donworth was buried without having become a *cause cèlébre*. On the 20th of the same month died a girl called Matilda Clover, a single woman with a child, who lived at 27 Lambeth Road. Unlike Alice Marsh and Emma Shrivell, she had caused no

undue comment by her death, and a careless doctor's assistant, who did not even see her die, obtained from his employer a certificate stating that the cause of death was delirium tremens and syncope. Clover, a lonely, friendless creature, was buried, and her baby taken to the workhouse ; her name would soon have passed from the memory even of those who had known her had it not been for a very peculiar circumstance. Sir William Broadbent, a well-known physician, received the following letter :

" London, *November* 28, 1891.

" Sir,—Miss Clover, who until a short time ago lived at 27 Lambeth Road, S.E., died at the above address on October 20 (last month) through being poisoned with strychnine. After her death a search of her effects was made, and evidence was found which showed that you not only gave her the medicine which caused her death, but that you had been hired for the purpose of poisoning her. The evidence is in the hands of one of our detectives, who will give the evidence either to you or to the police authorities for the sum of £2500 (Two thousand five hundred pounds sterling). You can have the evidence for £2500, and in that way save yourself from ruin. If the matter is disposed of to the police it will be made public by being published in the papers, and ruin you for ever. You know well enough that an accusation of that sort will ruin you for ever. Now, Sir, if you want the evidence for £2500, just put a personal in the *Daily Chronicle*, saying you will pay Malone £2500 for his services, and I will send a party to settle the matter. If you do not want the evidence, of course, it will be turned over to the police at once and published, and your ruin will surely follow. Think well before you decide on this matter. It is just this, £2500 sterling on the one hand, and ruin, shame, and disgrace

on the other. Answer by personal on the first page of the *Daily Chronicle* any time next week. I am not humbugging you. I have evidence strong enough to ruin you for ever. M. MALONE."

Sir William Broadbent sent the letter to Scotland Yard, where it was pigeon-holed and forgotten.

Mr. Frederick Smith, member of the firm of W. H. Smith and Son, had also been the recipient of a peculiar letter, in his case signed "Bayne." This letter was as follows :

"London, *November 5th*, 1891.

"Sir,—On Tuesday night, October 13th (last month) a girl named Ellen Donworth, but sometimes called Ellen Linnell [Ellen Donworth was living with a man called Linnell] who lived at 8 Duke Street, Westminster Bridge Road, was poisoned by strychnine. After her death among her effects were found two letters criminating you, which if they ever became public property will surely convict you of the crime. I enclose you a copy of one of the letters which the girl received on the morning of October 13th (the day on which she died). Just read it and then judge for yourself what hope you have of escape if the law officers ever get hold of these letters. Think of the shame and disgrace it will bring on your family if you are arrested and put in prison for this crime. My object in writing to you is to ask if you will retain me at once as your counsellor and legal adviser. If you employ me at once to act for you in the matter, I will save you from all exposure and shame in the matter, but if you wait until arrested before retaining me, then I cannot act for you, as no lawyer can save you after the authorities get hold of these two letters. If you wish to retain me, just write a few lines on a paper saying—' Mr. Fred Smith wishes to see Mr. Bayne, the barrister at once.' Paste this in

one of your shop windows at 186 Strand next Tuesday morning, and when I see it I will drop in and have a private interview with you. I can save you if you retain me in time, but not otherwise.—Yours truly,

H. BAYNE."

The enclosed letter referred to was as follows :

" Miss Ellen Linnell,—I wrote and warned you at once before that Frederick Smith, of W. H. Smith & Son, was going to poison you, and I am writing now to say that if you take any of the medicine he gave you you will die. I saw Frederick Smith prepare the medicine he gave you, and I saw him put enough strychnine in the medicine for to kill a horse. If you take any of it you will die. H. M. B."

A personage calling himself A. O'Brien, detective, had previously written to the Coroner during the inquest on Donworth, offering, for the modest sum of £300,000, to bring her murderer to justice. It afterwards transpired that O'Brien and Bayne were one and the same, and that neither was the true name of the writer. This letter, like the letter to Sir William Broadbent, was pigeon-holed at Scotland Yard and Donworth and Clover rested untroubled in their graves. But it is worth mentioning that Ellen Donworth had actually received on the morning of 13th October, the last morning she was ever to see, the letter a copy of which H. Bayne enclosed to Mr. Smith.

Six months had passed between the deaths of Clover and Donworth and those of Marsh and Shrivell, and even as Sir William Broadbent and Mr. Smith had received letters after the first

two tragedies, so a Dr. Harper of Barnstaple received a very similar epistle after Marsh and Shrivell died. This letter ran as follows :

" London, *April 25th*, 1892.

" Dear Sir,—I am writing to inform you that one of my operators has indisputable evidence that your son, W. H. Harper, a medical student at St. Thomas's Hospital, poisoned two girls, named Alice Marsh and Emma Shrivell, on the 12th inst., and that I am willing to give you the said evidence, that you may suppress it, for £1500 sterling, or sell it to the police for the same amount. The publication of the evidence would ruin you and your family for ever, and you know it as well as I do. To show you what I am writing is true, I am willing to send you a copy of the evidence against your son, so that you may read it. You will need no one to tell you that it will convict your son. Answer my letter at once through the columns of the London *Daily Chronicle*, as follows :

" ' W. H. M. . . . Will pay you for your services.—Dr. H.' When I see this in the paper I will communicate with you again. As I said before, I am perfectly willing to satisfy you that I have strong evidence against your son. If you don't answer it I am going to give evidence to the Coroner at once.—Yours truly,

W. H. MURRAY."

Enclosed with this letter were not only several newspaper cuttings relating to the deaths of Marsh and Shrivell, but also the following printed slip :

" Ellen Donworth's death. To the guests of the Metropole Hotel. I hereby certify you that the person who poisoned Ellen Donworth on the 13th day of last October is to-day in the employ of the Metropole Hotel, and your lives are in danger as long as you remain in this hotel. W. H. MURRAY."

Dr. Harper had a son who was a student at St. Thomas's Hospital and who lodged in the Lambeth Palace Road, and at the same house there lodged a man calling himself Thomas Neill. Dr. Harper wrote at once to his son and they agreed to consult Scotland Yard. There were by now several of the Murray letters, one to Dr. Harper, another to Coroner Wyatt and the foreman of the jury, who sat upon the bodies of Marsh and Shrivell, and the third to a Mr. Clark, a private enquiry agent at Cockspur Street, all accusing young Harper of having poisoned the girls.

It is important to notice that, in the case of Clover, whose death was brought in as being from delirium tremens, no one except her murderer could have known that she had died of poisoning, and therefore the man, whoever it was, who had written the letter to Sir William Broadbent must have been the man who was guilty of her death, for it was dated 28th November, 1891. The only point in which the writer of the letter was incorrect was that he stated Clover had died on 20th October, whereas as a matter of fact, she did not expire until 21st October, but this was a natural mistake to be made by the man who had himself administered the poison on the earlier date. But about that same date in October Dr. Cream told his landlady's daughter, Miss Sleaper, that a friend of his, a young lady with a child, had been poisoned in Lambeth Road, and suggested that Miss Sleaper should go round and make enquiries as to whether she were dead or

not. This Miss Sleaper, not liking the errand, refused to do. Dr. Neill, as he was then called, further informed Miss Sleaper that he knew who had poisoned the girl in Lambeth Road: he said that it was Lord Russell. The Russell matrimonial suit was then being heard, and Lady Russell was the recipient of a letter very similar to those that had been received by Sir William Broadbent and Mr. Smith. Countess Russell received this letter in the December of 1891, and showed it to various people, including Mr. George Lewis, the solicitor, but, woman-like, proceeded to lose the letter, and therefore it did not go to swell the curious little collection at Scotland Yard. Miss Sleaper appears to have had all the qualifications of a confidante, for her lodger also informed her that he was engaged to be married and showed her the portrait of his fiancee—Miss Sabatini. All this was in the latter end of 1891.

In January of 1892 the doctor went to Canada, previously making a will, as was only right and prudent, in favour of Miss Sabatini. He returned to Lambeth Palace Road on Saturday, 9th April, and on 17th April, the Sunday after the deaths of Marsh and Shrivell, when the report of the first enquiries was in the papers, he discussed their deaths with his usual confidante, Emily Sleaper, who seems always to have been made vaguely uneasy by the insistence with which he would persist in thrusting his opinions upon her. On this occasion he told her the two girls had been murdered in cold blood,

though, as a matter of fact, strychnine had not yet been found, the only mention of foul play being the opinion of the St. Thomas's house physician. About three weeks later he told her that her other lodger, Mr. Harper, was the guilty man, a statement, the truth of which Miss Sleaper denied with much indignation. Cream even made an opportunity to go into Mr. Harper's room on the drawing-room floor, and when Miss Sleaper found him there he asked her questions about her other lodger and looked through that gentleman's medical books.

Neill Cream had to talk—that was the whole matter; without speech his secret could give him no satisfaction, and he confided his opinions to an acquaintance of his, a young man called Haynes who lodged at the house of a Mr. and Mrs. Armstead in the Westminster Bridge Road. Mr. Armstead was a photographer, and Neill Cream went to his house several times to have his photograph taken, another curious desire for the enhancement of personality which it might be thought a murderer would be prudent enough to resist. Neill Cream opened the subject of the deaths of Marsh and Shrivell with young Haynes in the month of May. Cream stated that Walter Harper, his fellow lodger, was the guilty man, and that he had not only poisoned Marsh and Shrivell but three other women as well—Ellen Donworth, Matilda Clover and Lou Harvey. Not content with having brought up this array of names, Cream insisted on dragging Haynes with him in a weird pilgrimage to the house in

Lambeth Road where Matilda Clover had died. He insisted that Haynes should go into the house, while he himself waited outside, and enquire if Matilda Clover had died there from poisoning. He then dragged Mr. Haynes on all the way to Townsend Road, St John's Wood, where had resided Lou Harvey. This Lou Harvey, so Cream informed Haynes, had been poisoned by Harper at a music hall and must have fallen dead either there or between it and another music hall. He gave the names of these two places of entertainment as the Royal and the Oxford.

Mr. Haynes was obscurely troubled by the strange, excited manner of his informant, yet his statement seemed so circumstantial—for Cream even went to the length of declaring that Harper had told him that he was in great trouble and asked him for some strychnine—that he felt something ought to be done about the matter, and therefore he repaired to Scotland Yard. Haynes had at one time followed the profession of private enquiry agent, being, indeed, a secret agent sometimes employed by the Home Office, and when Cream found this out he became more confidential than ever. He showed Haynes the photograph of young Harper which he had stolen from Miss Sleaper's album. Armed with what he considered first-hand knowledge, Mr. Haynes saw Detective-Sergeant M'Intyre, whom he had known for some years, suppressing, however, the name of Neill Cream according to a promise he had made. M'Intyre made enquiries at the house in Townsend Road but could find out

nothing about Lou Harvey, who seemed to have disappeared into space. The only thing certain about her, and that was negative, was that no one of that name had been reported to Scotland Yard as having died in suspicious circumstances. The enquiry dragged on and died a natural death. Then there came the day when Dr. Harper of Barnstaple received the letter signed W. H. Murray, and this letter he sent to Scotland Yard where, by a fateful coincidence, it was given to Detective M'Intyre, who already possessed that other letter signed Murray which had been sent to the jury at the inquest on Marsh and Shrivell, as well as the letter which had been addressed to Sir William Broadbent, and signed Malone.

The police knew, of course, that Marsh and Shrivell had been poisoned, but Lou Harvey they had failed to trace entirely ; the bodies of Clover and Donworth were now exhumed, and the result of an analysis proved that these two also had been poisoned with strychnine. The only clues connecting these cases together, excepting the similarity of the poison, were the letters, which were signed in different names, and were in two different writings.

Meanwhile, the one remaining thing needful to wreck him utterly had been done by Neill Cream ; not content with brandishing the word murder, before murder had ever been thought of in connection with the names he mentioned, not content with writing his childish letters and dragging his acquaintances about to houses with

which otherwise he himself would never have been connected, he claimed the protection of the police. He saw Detective M'Intyre, whom he already knew slightly as a friend of the Armsteads, who had introduced him earlier in the month, described himself as a commercial traveller and complained of being followed. He asked that M'Intyre should look into the matter and save him from this annoyance in future. M'Intyre had no cause at this time to suspect Cream of murder, but something strange about the man made him decide to make enquiries about him.

It was not without reason that Cream complained to Detective-Sergeant M'Intyre that he was being watched. On the fateful morning of 12th April, Police-Constable Comley had been passing along Stamford Street when he saw a man come out of No. 118 ; the light of a street lamp, which was directly opposite the door, fell upon the man's face : he was about five feet ten inches, apparently between forty and fifty years of age, wore a high silk hat and glasses ; he had a moustache, but no whiskers. This was at about 1.45 in the morning. George Comley noticed also the young woman who let the man out ; she was Emma Shrivell, whom he was to see an hour later being carried to a cab by Eversfield in her death agonies. Comley himself, when he came upon that tragic scene carried Marsh into the cab, and went with both girls and Eversfield to the hospital. He questioned Shrivell as to what she had eaten and, according to him, she

replied: "I have had some supper, and a gentleman gave us three pills each." Comley asked her: "Was it the gentleman you let out at a quarter to two, with glasses on?" and she replied "Yes."

At the time when Comley had observed the man being let out he did not think much of the circumstance, for, as he afterwards said in cross-examination: "At that time of night a number of men come from such houses." What a picture, in that simple and common-place sentence, of furtive seekers after passion going their way homewards from the sordid houses which had harboured them for an hour or so!

This morning of 12th April was cold and dark, and the man walked briskly away, but Police-Constable Comley had obtained a good view of him and duly described him in his report. A month later, in Westminster Bridge Road, Police-Constable Comley felt certain he saw him again. The man, of whose identity he was still ignorant, was loitering up and down watching the women that passed, scrutinising the prostitutes closely. Presently he went off with a woman to her room in Elliott's Road, and was with her there for an hour-and-a-half, while Comley and Ward—the latter a Police Sergeant who had been furnished with the description of the man seen coming out of the Stamford Street house—were watching for him outside. Later the suspected man let himself into 103 Lambeth Palace Road with a latch-key. Since this occurrence the house in Lambeth Palace Road had been under observation, Cream

himself had been followed, and the Armstead house was watched whenever he was there. Indeed, one day when Cream was at their house, Mrs. Armstead drew his attention and that of her husband to the fact that observation was being kept upon them, whereupon Cream pointed to a man standing in the roadway and asked if that were one of the watchers, adding, entirely out of the blue: "What a dreadful murder that was in Stamford Street." Mrs. Armstead asked him whether he had known the two girls, and he replied that he knew them very well indeed, he had often seen them up on the Bridge where they used to solicit. Mr. Armstead made enquiries and found out that it was Neill Cream who was being watched. The next day he asked him why he was followed and why he had not told him. Cream replied that he had intended to tell him later that the police were mistaking him for Mr. Harper who lived in the same house.

After Cream complained about being followed, M'Intyre began inquiries about him and discovered that Comley had declared him to be like the man whom he had seen leave the Stamford Street house. M'Intyre continued to keep up with Cream, and on one occasion went with him into "The Pheasant" public house with Inspector Harvey and Chief-Inspector Mulvaney. Cream complained that a few nights earlier he had met a woman of the unfortunate class, whom he termed "a rip," in the Westminster Bridge Road, and that she told him she had been

set to spy on him by the police. M'Intyre suggested that Cream should fetch his letters and his case of samples to prove that he really was the commercial traveller he gave himself out as being, a proposition to which Cream eagerly assented. It is noteworthy that when M'Intyre in the first place asked him why he thought he was being shadowed, Cream had replied he thought it was because he had some indecent photographs in his possession and went about a lot with loose women. The net was now almost ready to close round Neill Cream, but the authorities wished to have absolutely unassailable evidence before they struck. The paper on which the letter to Dr. Harper had been written bore the water-mark—" Fairfield Superfine Quality "—of a mill in Canada, the country where Cream had so lately been. M'Intyre got Cream to write him a sentence or two on a sheet of note-paper at the latter's lodgings and found the same water-mark.

Cream now began to be seriously disturbed about his acquaintance with the detective—an acquaintance which he himself had started. It will be seen to what incredible lengths Cream went in his foolishness when it is known that during his acquaintance with M'Intyre he had spun him a story about a man called Murray (it will be remembered that some of the black-mailing letters were signed Murray) by whom he said he had been stopped in the street about a week before the last inquest on Marsh and Shrivell. This phantom man Murray had,

according to Cream, questioned him about young Harper and showed him a letter addressed to Shrivell and Marsh warning them to be careful of Dr. Harper, as he would serve them as he had done the girls Clover and Harvey. Murray, according to Cream, was a detective in charge of the case. Up to the moment when Cream invented this story for the benefit of M'Intyre, the latter had not heard the names of Clover and Harvey. Cream even described the mythical Murray as being a man of about forty years of age, five feet nine inches high and wearing a dark beard, whiskers and moustache. Cream's nervous restlessness of temperament drove him from revelation to revelation and invention to invention ; sometimes he would be taken with fits of trembling, sometimes he would be apparently light-hearted and care-free. However, by the 26th of May he had become thoroughly nervous, and on meeting M'Intyre in Westminster Bridge Road, committed the imprudence of telling him that he wanted to go away and asking him whether he was likely to be arrested if he attempted to leave London. M'Intyre replied he could not tell, but advised him to go along with him to Scotland Yard and find out if they had anything against him. They had walked some distance over the bridge when Cream suddenly stopped and told M'Intyre he suspected he was not playing straight with him ; he even went to the fantastic lengths of saying he would consult a solicitor about being annoyed in this way by the police and asked M'Intyre to recommend him

one. The detective pointed out that this would hardly be consistent with his position, and the two men parted.

On 3rd June authority moved and Cream was arrested at his rooms, though he was charged not with murder but with attempt to extort money from Dr. Harper of Barnstaple by means of false pretences. All Cream said when arrested was: "You have got the wrong man; fire away!" The inspector who made the arrest—Inspector Tonbridge—showed him the envelope in which the letter had been sent to Dr. Harper, saying: "This is what you are accused of sending." Cream replied: "That is not my writing." Tonbridge took the letter out of the envelope and said: "This is the letter," to which Cream made no reply. On Tuesday, 12th July, after having been several times remanded on the original charge and being in court in the custody of two warders when the inquest was held on the exhumed body of Matilda Clover, Cream was brought up at Bow Street and charged with the wilful murder of Matilda Clover.

A dramatic turn was given to these proceedings by the appearance in the living flesh of Lou Harvey, who had been so much more fortunate than those other sister professionals. Her real name was Harris but, after the fashion of these women, she had taken temporarily the name of the man with whom she was living—a good-for-nothing young house-painter called Charles Harvey. She told how, in the October

of the previous year, she had been spoken to by a man, whom she now recognised as Neill, outside St. James's Hall. As usual, Cream had felt that he must satisfy both his lusts as nearly together as possible, and he spent that night with her at an hotel in Berwick Street; and in the morning, when leaving her, made an appointment to meet her again that evening on the Embankment, when he said he would give her some pills to cure some spots which he had noticed on her forehead. She met him that evening and he told her he had brought the pills and that she had better have a glass of wine first; he took her with him to the Northumberland public house and gave her wine, and also some roses—strangely beautiful and poetic gifts to come from such a man.

They left the public house and walked back towards the Embankment, and it was then he produced the pills, after telling her he would not be able to go with her to a music hall as arranged, but that she was to go and he would meet her at 11 o'clock and take her to the same hotel as the previous night. There was probably in his mind a sense of excitement and pleasure at the thought of her sitting in the music hall where, as he thought, she would be taken with the pains of death. He gave her the pills—the "long pills" that the other women described—and told her to swallow them whole. Some instinct warned Lou Harvey of danger and, while pretending to swallow them, she really passed them to her other hand. He asked her to show him

her right hand, into which he had put the pills, and she did so, which satisfied him ; meanwhile, she had dropped the pills unobserved into the roadway. He gave her five shillings to pay for her seat at the music hall and wanted to put her into a cab, doubtless so that he should be sure of her going there, but she told him she would find a cab for herself. She was really meaning to meet Harvey who, unknown to Cream, had accompanied her that evening. Harvey seems to have been a most ignoble person, who never worked unless he could not avoid it, and who said it was nothing to do with him what Louisa did for a living. Nevertheless he, too, felt there was something suspicious about this offer of medicine from a strange man, and he had accompanied her that evening to see that all was well. He and Lou went away together, and for once Neil Cream was cheated of his sensation. How this rankled may be guessed from the inquiries that he perpetually made in his desire to find out how and where she had died.

The long, fantastic dance was over at last. After his successful murders of Donworth and Clover, Cream had become engaged to Miss Sabatini, had gone for a trip to Canada, and then come back again to his old haunts, compelled by Heaven only knows what desire and inward compulsion, and there this strange lust for power had claimed gratification once more, and Marsh and Shrivell had died as successfully as Clover and Donworth, in long-drawn-out agonies, and Cream had had the satisfaction of reading

the account of their sufferings in the daily papers.

Still with that inward compulsion strong upon him, he had had to keep on and on at the subject with everyone he knew, careering round London with the puzzled Haynes, pestering Scotland Yard, pumping Miss Sleaper about his harmless fellow lodger, and all the while pursuing his dirty amours with this and that woman whom he picked up at the street corners known to him. Doubtless, if his own fantastic piping had not drawn attention to the strangeness of his measure, these other women, too, in their turn would have danced the dance of death at his bidding. With each success his satisfaction at the power he carried had increased, until he felt that he must hear discussion about the thing at whatever cost. That he was a fearful and timorous man there is no doubt, in spite of his incredible rashness. He was terrified of arrest, always subject to nervous tremblings, restless and uneasy even when no one suspected him, bold to rashness when they did. It is impossible to say what sort of emotion went on in that hardly-human mind when it realised that the game was up at last, that the fantastic dance across an ocean and round about mean streets was ended.

In the dock, Neill Cream appeared composed and pleaded " Not Guilty " to the charge of the wilful murder of Alice Marsh, Ellen Donworth, Emma Shrivell and Matilda Clover, also to the charges of sending Joseph Harper a letter

demanding money with menaces, of sending a similar letter to William Henry Broadbent and attempting to administer to Louisa Harvey a large quantity of strychnine with intent to murder her.

The Attorney-General, Sir Charles Russell—afterwards Lord Russell of Killowen and Lord Chief Justice—conducted the prosecution ; Mr. Geoghegan lead for the defence. The trial lasted from Tuesday, 18th October, to Saturday the 22nd, and gradually there was piled up by witness after witness a terrible picture of the life that Cream and his victims had lived. From a baptismal certificate found amongst Cream's papers, he appeared to have been born in May 1850. His father was a Scotchman and lived in Glasgow, but had emigrated, when his son Thomas was a child, to America. There Neill Cream seems to have received a medical education and possessed some kind of a degree, and a Mr. Levy, a licensed victualler, was called to prove that Cream was practising in Chicago as a physician in 1881. Cream arrived in England on 1st October, 1891, and came to Anderton's Hotel in London ; while there, on 6th October, he met in the street a young woman called Eliza Masters.

With her he went to Gatti's music hall, where she introduced him to a friend called Elizabeth May. Both these women were of that class never more truly dubbed " unfortunate " than in this particular case, and had some curious evidence to give. They lived in the inappropriately named

Orient Buildings off the Lambeth Road. The kindly fate that was to protect Lou Harvey was watching over these two also, for there can be little doubt that Cream had marked them down for his first victims in London. On 9th October Eliza Masters received a letter stating that the writer would come and see her between 3 and 5 o'clock that afternoon. He recalled himself to her by mentioning the evening at Gatti's music hall, and he made the curious request, which he made at other times to other women, namely, that she was not to destroy the letter as he wished to get it back when he came to see her. Masters and May were of the kind that hunt in couples, and accordingly Masters told her friend of the expected visitor, and the two women were on the look-out together when the hour arrived.

As they sat looking out of the window, they saw coming along on the opposite side of the street a young woman whom they knew by sight but not by name ; she was carrying a basket and she wore, as was her custom, a white apron with straps that crossed over her shoulders. After her down the street, trailing her as a wild animal might trail its prey, came their expected visitor. The young woman looked round once or twice, as though fully recognising that she was being followed, and once she smiled—probably her professional smile. Not turning into Orient Buildings as he should have done to keep his appointment, the man kept on after her. Excited —perhaps annoyed at what they may have con-

sidered a breach of professional etiquette on the part of this young woman poaching, so to speak, upon their preserves—May and Masters went down into the street and in their turn followed the other two. They saw the girl go to the door of No. 27 Lambeth Road and wait until the man came up with her ; the girl opened the door, the two went in and it was shut behind them. The baffled Eliza and her friend waited for half an hour, but the man did not come out again during that time, and Masters never saw him again until she was asked to go to Bow Street to identify him.

Between the date when Neill Cream met Matilda Clover and the date on which she died, occurred the tragedy of Ellen Donworth. She had been picked up in the street on 13th October between 6 and 7 p.m. ; she was in great agony and, like Alice Marsh, died on the way to St. Thomas's Hospital in a cab. There was not sufficient evidence to connect anyone with her death, and yet on 19th October it was proved that Cream had written to the Deputy Coroner a letter, to which reference has already been made, offering to bring the murderer of Ellen Donworth to justice for the fee of £300,000. On 5th November he wrote the letter to Mr. Smith, in which he enclosed a copy of the note he had sent to Ellen Donworth or Linnell. Comparison of the dates of this period will show a most strange and hardly credible series of facts. On the night of 20th October, or the morning of the 21st, he met Lou Harvey, spent the night

at Berwick's Hotel with her and the next evening attempted to murder her. It seems as though Neill must have suffered from attacks of his mania which worked him up to such a terrific pitch that one indulgence only made him crave another immediately before he felt his desires slaked.

Cream comes to London on 5th October, meets Masters and May on the 6th, arranges to meet them again on the 9th—the time in the meanwhile having been occupied by finding himself the lodgings in the Lambeth Palace Road—forgets about them and does indeed meet Matilda Clover : on 13th October poisons Ellen Donworth : on the 20th kills Clover, and on the 22nd endeavours to kill Lou Harvey. Small wonder that after this he was content to let the field of his dreadful passions lie fallow for a while, contenting himself with perpetually dragging the fact of the deaths up in conversation and letters. When Inspector Tonbridge searched Neill's bedroom after his arrest he found an envelope on which the following was written : " 19th October, M. C. 13th October-11th April, E. S. 23rd October, L. H." Still, in spite of his foolish behaviour, there is no doubt that if Neill Cream had chosen not to return from Canada in April of the following year he could have gone to his grave in the full course of time free from any accusation regarding the deaths of Clover and Donworth.

Gradually the household at 27 Lambeth Road was presented before the jury. The landlady of

the house, a Mrs. Voules or Phillips, seems to have been instrumental in hushing up the death as much as possible, doubtless not wishing her rooms to obtain an unenviable notoriety. Mrs. Voules had carried her desire for pleasantness to such a point that when she registered the death she stated that Clover had been a charwoman, and that she had been present at her death, which was not the case; her rather feeble excuse to Mr. Justice Hawkins was that she had made that statement from want of thought. The servant girl at 27 Lambeth Road was called Lucy Rose. Clover had two rooms on the top floor and had living with her her little boy. On the day before Clover died Lucy Rose found in her room an open letter lying beside its envelope. After the habit of servant maids, Lucy Rose read the letter; it was an invitation asking Matilda Clover to meet the writer, who signed himself "Fred," outside Canterbury Hall at 7.30 that evening. In the letter was an injunction that Matilda Clover should bring it with her when she was keeping the appointment, and the envelope also. After Clover's death, Lucy Rose hunted everywhere for the letter but failed to find it. Before going out, apparently to keep the appointment, Clover asked Lucy Rose to help her put her child to bed, which the girl did, and at about 7.30 Clover went out. Later, probably about 9 o'clock, she came back, and was let in by Lucy; she had with her a man who, as well as Lucy could see by the light of the small paraffin lamp, was tall and broad and had a heavy

moustache; he was wearing a large coat with a cape to it and a silk hat. This apparently commonplace meeting in the lodging-house hall between these three people with the exquisite pastoral names of Rose, Clover and Cream—which might well be a refrain from lyric poetry—would have been curious indeed to anyone who could have seen through outward appearances and into the people's minds. Lucy Rose—a little lodging-house drudge, but kind-hearted, willing to help put the baby to bed in spite of the heaviness of her own work—little knew when she would see that apparently ordinary client of Matilda Clover's again. Poor Clover—the girl who had smiled over her shoulder at this same man eleven days earlier—was probably prepared to go through with the usual routine without any special emotions on the subject, unconscious of the fact that her span of life was already as good as ended. And Cream himself, standing there in his big overcoat and his silk hat, with the poison in his pocket—who can say what exultant thoughts, what a rising tide of excitement were welling within him?

Once more Clover went out, to fetch some beer, and later still Lucy Rose heard a door open—Clover apparently letting the man out of the house, as she heard some words of good-night spoken between them. About an hour later still Clover again went out, and had not returned before Lucy Rose went to sleep. Rose was awakened at about 3 o'clock by the sound of screaming. She called the landlady and they

went into Clover's room. They found her in great agony lying across the bed, her head wedged between the side of the bed and the wall. She declared that she had been poisoned ; she twitched violently, vomited, and had violent convulsions. Mrs. Voules sent for a Doctor Graham, but his assistant—a man named Coppin —arrived in his stead. Coppin received the impression that Clover suffered from epileptic fits and alcoholic poisoning, and the landlady told him she was in the habit of drinking too much. He was only with her about ten or twelve minutes. He sent her some medicine to stop the vomiting ; but he thought that she was dying, and gave it to Dr. Graham as his opinion that drink was the cause. Mrs. Voules sent again for Coppin, but he did not come. Clover grew steadily worse, and all through her hours of agony the little servant girl sat with her—once making her a cup of tea and once giving her some soda and milk. In the moments of relief between the spasms she was calm and collected and asked to see her baby. She did not die till nine o'clock in the morning. Dr. Graham next day gave a certificate of death from the information that Mrs. Voules and Mr. Coppin had given him—a proceeding that the Attorney-General stigmatised as a grave dereliction of duty. Matilda Clover was buried in a pauper's grave, her child was taken to the workhouse, and her new boots pawned by Mrs. Voules. Not a soul suspected that Matilda Clover had been murdered, and yet Cream spoke of such a possibility to Miss

Sleaper and wrote the letter signed "Malone" to Sir William Broadbent.

It is a curious point that the man with whom Matilda Clover had been living, and who was the father of her child, was called Fred—a small, slight, fair man with blue eyes. They had quarrelled seriously and he had taken himself off, much to Clover's grief, about a month before she met Cream; but if Lucy Rose's memory was to be trusted, the letter she had found on the table making an appointment with Clover was signed Fred, and it will be remembered that Marsh and Shrivell knew Neill Cream only as Fred. There was no shadow of suspicion against the real original Fred, and it seems likely that Cream had told Clover, on hearing her story, that he also was called Fred, and had stuck to the name when starting on his second series of murders. Perhaps he thought to incriminate—should any question arise about Clover's death—her previous lover; perhaps he was merely adopting the first name that came into his head, as he would naturally not wish to give his own. Be that as it may, Lucy Rose, at one of her examinations, insisted that Clover had gasped out that she was poisoned and that that "wretch Fred" had done it; although Mrs. Voules, consistent in her desire to thwart any suggestion of foul play, had stoutly denied that Clover had said anything of the kind. Mr. Coppin declared that no mention of poison was made to him, and thus it came about that even his adoption of the name of Clover's lover was not necessary

to Cream as a protection. The question of poison was never raised at all except by Cream's own letters and statements.

A commercial traveller called John Wilson M'Culloch was able to throw light upon Cream's life in Canada. The two men had met in the February of 1892 at Blanchard's Hotel in Quebec. M'Culloch was not introduced to Cream but merely fell into the habit of conversing with him as one hotel acquaintance does with another. Cream called him into his room and showed him samples of pills and about eighteen or twenty bottles of various sizes. Out of a cash box he produced another bottle—about three inches long—and asked M'Culloch if he knew what was in it. M'Culloch replying in the negative, Cream said, " That's poison." " For God's sake what do you want that for ? " asked the startled M'Culloch, to which Cream replied : " I give that to women to get them out of the family way ; I give it to them in these," and he showed M'Culloch some capsules. It may well be that the promise of bringing about abortion or of preventing conception was the inducement that Cream used to make the women take his pills. Cream talked a lot to M'Culloch about London, and told him that he had " lots of fun with women " there. He mentioned Waterloo, Victoria and Westminster Bridge Road as his hunting grounds.

Cream had all the insensate egoism of the born criminal, and he dragged M'Culloch about Quebec, showing him where his brother and

other relations had lived in business and where he himself had worked as a boy. He showed him a photograph of Miss Sabatini and photographs of other women. He had showed Masters and May photographs of himself and of his mother on the occasion of his meeting them in the music hall; and, indeed, showing people photographs of himself or of anything to do with him seems to have been a favourite occupation of his. M'Culloch grew to dislike his hotel acquaintance, who had, as he said, "a loose tongue about women," and who showed him indecent photographs as well as the family portraits. He confided to him also that he practised abortion, and showed him a pair of false whiskers and a beard which, he said, he wore when operating to prevent identification.

The usual evidence as to the possession of poison was gone into. A chemist gave evidence that Cream had bought *nux vomica* from him and also gelatine capsules, which he had changed next day for a smaller size. Dr. Stevenson, the Home Office analyst, had received from Inspector Tonbridge a case found in Cream's room containing fifty-four bottles of pills and several boxes of coated pills. Of the fifty-four bottles, seven contained strychnine—each pill containing strychnine in medicinal quantity—1-22nd of a grain to each pill: twenty-two of them would make a complete grain and eleven of them half a grain, rather less than half a grain being a fatal dose. The general nature of the pills was sugary and sticky, and from four to

twenty could be got into each capsule according to its size, but if strychnine crystals alone were put into the capsule it would hold more of the poison. It was admitted by the prosecution that Cream himself was in the habit of occasionally taking strychnine, and he also drugged himself frequently with morphia and opium, and had done so for years.

The most pathetic figure during the trial was that of Laura Sabatini—a respectable girl who had worked as a dressmaker and lived with her mother at Berkhampstead. She had to confess that she had written some of the letters herself at Cream's dictation, and this accounted for a fact that had puzzled Scotland Yard—the fact that all the letters were not in the same writing and that only some of them corresponded to the specimen they had obtained of Cream's hand. Miss Sabatini had written the letter to Coroner Wyatt enclosing a note to the jury—both signed "Murray," also the letter to Clark, the private detective. She had asked Cream why he used the name Murray, and he said it was a friend of his, a detective, who was examining into the case and that some day he would tell her all about it. She became engaged to Cream in 1891, and in January 1892 he went to America for the purpose, so he said, of seeing about his father's estate. Before his departure he made a will in her favour in which he described himself as Thomas Neill Cream, physician, late of the city of Quebec, and left her the whole of his property. This will was in the same hand-

writing as the blackmailing letters. It was obvious that, though puzzled, Laura Sabatini had written the letters in good faith, for, although she realised that the letters made a terrible accusation against Harper, she thought that Cream with his friend Murray was at work upon the case. The first that she knew of his being in danger was when he was actually arrested.

Mr. Geoghegan's speech for the defence was a brilliant exposition of the gentle art of making bricks without straw. He made the most of the fact that Lucy Rose had not recognised the prisoner when she was taken to identify him, and that her description of a man with a heavy moustache and silk hat might apply to forty thousand respectable people walking about the streets of London; that Matilda Clover had lived for an extraordinarily long time after the dose of strychnine if it had been administered to her by the man in question; and that accurate identification by May and Masters of a man, whom they had only seen once and whom they were looking down upon from a window high up, was unlikely. But the array of facts was overwhelming, and Mr. Justice Hawkins in his summing up left no doubt as to which way he expected the jury to decide. The jury were only absent for twelve minutes and returned a verdict of "Wilful Murder." The prisoner made no answer when asked if he had anything to say as to why the court should not give him judgment to die according to the law: and Mr. Justice Hawkins accordingly passed sentence of death.

Cream listened intently but betrayed no emotion, and was removed quietly from the dock and the sight of the world of men and women.

It is almost certain that nowadays Neill Cream would have been found insane, but in the leading article of *The Times* for 22nd October, 1892, there was a certain note of smug satisfaction that Cream was to die :

" Nobody who had read the evidence can doubt the justice of his doom ; all right-minded persons, as we believe, must experience a feeling of satisfaction that a villain so inhuman is soon to meet his deserts. That feeling is, in our opinion, legitimate and praiseworthy. It springs from an instinct implanted in our nature, and which constitutes one of the strongest and most valuable of the great permanent bulwarks of society—the instinct that justice ought to be retributive and that abominable crimes rightly deserve the hatred of the community.

" Neill has been convicted of one murder only, but it is morally certain that he is guilty of all the four murders for which he was indicted, and of an attempt to murder the woman Harvey.

" The history of his career, or rather of the brief portion of his career which was discussed in the witness-box, is of a kind which is not easy to discuss in decent language, but it is not without its own terrible lessons. It reveals, as the career of Deeming revealed some months ago, the depths of depravity and cruelty which exist in the human heart. It demonstrates what too many amiable persons, who have no practical acquaintance with misery and with crime, are in these days inclined through a false and misguided benevolence to doubt and to deny, that there does exist amongst us a certain number of moral monsters whom it is the first duty of society to hunt down and to destroy. They

are to all appearance utterly devoid of moral sense. Their one object in life is to gratify their own evil passions, and they pursue that object wholly regardless of the sufferings of their fellows, without scruple and without remorse. It has been shown in repeated instances that wretches of this kind, who are insensible to every other motive for restraining their criminal appetites, quail before the threat of corporal punishment, and in particular before the threat of death. But even if this were not the case, it is our right and our duty to exterminate them upon proof of their guilt. They are enemies of their race, and society is bound, in duty to its weaker members, to mete out to them the measure they have meted out to others."

Mr. Aitcheson, the optician who had fitted Neill with glasses, wrote the following not uninteresting letter to *The Times* of 27th October :

" Sir,—The total disappearance of moral sense from the man Neill, now under sentence of death for the murder of Matilda Clover, has been freely attributed to his indulgence in opiates, which it is not denied he made use of in excessive quantities. But the original cause of the nervous break-up which rendered opiates almost necessary to the man's existence, has been entirely overlooked, and as the same cause is operating in the same direction in hundreds of other cases to-day, you may perhaps be kind enough to allow me to draw attention to it.

" Whatever the doctors may say to the contrary notwithstanding, to the defective eyesight from which Neill has suffered all his life may actually, though by the somewhat indirect process I have indicated, be attributed the very crimes for which justice is now rightly exacting the death penalty.

" When Neill came to me for treatment I was able by the application of ordinary methods to determine that the defect had been of lifelong duration, and that

an incalculable amount of harm might have been obviated if his eyes had been corrected in early childhood. The original defect in the left eye is hypermetropia—*i.e.* the optic axis of the eye is too short, and thus the rays of light do not focus perfectly on the retina; but would focus properly (if they were not stopped in progress) at a point beyond the retina. A child suffering from this defect unconsciously puts a great strain on the accommodation in trying to correct it. Convergence naturally follows, and as years go on this strain is found to cause headaches and nervous pains. This would especially be the case when the eyes have to be used much for study, as in the instance of a man studying for the medical profession; and that Neill had a considerable knowledge of medical matters, gained undoubtedly by continuous study, no person who came in contact with him failed to discover.

"The average doctor, I know, puts these head troubles down to any cause but the right one, and the result, as I can vouch for in hundreds of cases that have come under my notice, is that the use of drugs and sedatives becomes absolutely necessary, and, accentuating defects already existing in the eyes, produces changes in the moral nature which sometimes evidence their progress in ways that are startling and repulsive.

"I remain, yours truly,

J. AITCHESON."

47 Fleet Street,
London, E.C. *October* 22.

This ingenious letter brought down on the head of its author many indignant comments from people with defective eyesight, who apparently imagined that he had stated that such a defect must necessarily give a tendency to criminality; to which he replied that all he had meant was that the neglect of Cream's eyes in infancy

was a primary cause of that "moral anarchy" which had brought him to the condemned cell.

There is certainly no doubt that Neill suffered badly from pains in his head and drugged himself heavily in consequence, but the roots of what Mr. Aitcheson called his "moral anarchy" lay deeper than the optic nerve.

The murder of Matilda Clover had not been Cream's first incursion into crime. He had already been implicated with the deaths of two women in America, but in each case the evidence against him had not been considered strong enough and he had escaped justice. He had actually been found guilty of the murder by strychnine of the elderly husband of a mistress of his, and had been sentenced to imprisonment for life—in spite of the fact that he had tried to throw all the blame upon the woman ; unfortunately, this sentence was commuted to seventeen years and then was further shortened by an allowance for good conduct. So, amazing as it may seem, this human tiger, who, besides having been found guilty of murder, was known to be a professional abortionist and a writer of scurrilous and obscene letters, was let loose upon the world once more, and at least four women in England paid with their lives for this mistaken clemency.

Cream was executed at nine o'clock in the morning of Wednesday, 16th November. He made no confession, nor referred in any way to the crimes with which he had been charged. Thus there died at the age of forty-two, this

extraordinary criminal, whose crimes seemed mad and yet were not without method, and whose whole plane of consciousness seems to have been so gross and debased that it is difficult to think of him as a human being and insulting to the animals to class him as one of them. He stands out in the annals of criminology as one of that fantastically evil group which contains such figures as Jegado, Zwanziger and Van de Leyden, and amongst these he is chiefly remarkable for the fact that killers suffering from the power mania have generally been women, unless, indeed, killing on the Napoleonic scale is considered to be an extreme example of the same instinct.

§ VI

The Murder from Conviction

ORSINI

For two reasons the case of Orsini is of supreme importance. To begin with there has never been a clearer example of the true murder from conviction than that presented by this fanatical Italian, and in the second, the political circumstances which led up to his crime and those which were the result of it make it an event of as great importance as he could have hoped for when he threw his bomb. There is a third point —minor in importance, though hardly so in interest to the modern mind—in connection with this case, and that is that although Orsini succeeded in killing eight people and in wounding one hundred and fifty, yet the count on which he was tried was that of attempting to assassinate the Emperor Napoléon III.

On the evening of 14th June, 1858, at about half past nine o'clock, the Emperor Napoléon III. and the Empress Eugénie arrived at the Paris Opera House in the Rue Lepelletier. The first carriage, which contained the officers of the Emperor's household, was followed by an escort of lancers of the Imperial Guard, after which came the carriage containing the Emperor and Empress and General Roguet. This second carriage slackened its pace to drive under the arch-way, and at the moment that it did so there

came a terrific explosion ; then another and yet another, each explosion being nearer to the Imperial carriage, the third directly under it. Had it not been that the carriage was lined with iron plates everyone in it must have been killed. Sixty-six bullet marks were found upon its exterior. The first explosion had by its mere concussion blown out the gas jets in front of the theatre so that only the flashes of fire from bombs and pistols illumined the darkness. The windows of the vestibule and of the houses opposite were blown out and a later examination showed that walls and pavement were pitted deeply by the fragments of iron that had struck them. One of the horses was killed outright, the other was so badly injured that it had to be shot. General Roguet was injured in the side of the neck by a bomb splinter, but all that had happened to the Imperial pair was that Napoléon had received a bullet through his cocked hat and that the Empress's face bled from a graze on the temple. All around them the pavement and gutter ran with blood, the walls were splashed with it and some 158 people were struck, how horribly the medical reports convey, for they stated that the number of wounds distributed amongst these people were 511.

Dr. Tardieu, in his report, dated 23rd January, says :

" Most of the wounds are very deep, and although apparently small, have produced delirium and considerable disturbance of the system ; in consequence of the nature of the projectiles, burning pieces of

irregular form, and of the depth and narrowness of the wounds they are complicated with congestion, phlegmosis and neuralgic pains, which add greatly to their severity. Two of the victims are already dead, and nine others are still in danger; some of the wounded, although not injured in vital parts, will remain cripples to the end of their days."

The two men who had died were a Garde de Paris and an employé of Prince Jerome's household. The former was wounded in nine places and the latter in eleven, his intestines being pierced in eight places.

In a supplemental report of 11th February, Dr. Tardieu states that six more victims have died:

"1. Mr. Haas, an American merchant, died on January 26th from a wound in the head. 2. Ruffin, died January 27th from inflammation which spread to the brain. 3. Dussange, died February 5th, wounded in the head. 4. Chasseur, died February 6th, purulent affection, the direct consequence of his wounds. 5. Dalhen, a Garde Paris, died February 8th, purulent affection proceeding from a deep wound in the arm. 6. Watteau, died February 8th, almost suddenly from phlegmosis."

Amongst the wounded were many women and children. The Emperor and Empress behaved according to the best traditions, and when they had seen that everything possible was being done for the injured, they went into the Opera House and took their places in the box as though nothing had happened.

The inspirer of this crime was Felice Orsini and he had with him three confederates—de

Rudio, Pieri and Gomez—while a man called Bernard, who was afterwards caught and acquitted in England, much to French indignation, was implicated in the affair. Of these men, Orsini was incontestably the leading spirit.

The story of Orsini is more than the story of a fanatic, it is also the story of Mazzini and of Napoléon III. Without the revolution of 1848 there would have been no crime of 1858.

Orsini had struck to forward the cause of United Italy, that United Italy which Louis Napoléon had sworn as a young man to further by every means in his power. As a youth, Louis Napoléon had fought in the ranks of the Italian patriots against the Pope's troops and his genuine sympathies were always on the side of liberty in Italy, yet, as ruler of France, he found himself in the anomalous position of supporting the Pope's temporal power by the French troops despatched to Italy in 1849. The French Catholics sided with the Papal authority, French Liberals with the Italian rebels, the Empress Eugénie advocated the cause of the Pope. Italy was suffering and had suffered bitterly for years under the Austrian oppression; Venice and Lombardy belonged to Austria; Tuscany, Parma, Medina and the Papal States were to all intents and purposes under Austrian influence, Sicily and the kingdom of Naples were misruled by Ferdinand II., the only approximation of freedom to be found in Italy was in Sardinia and Piedmont, ruled over by Victor Emmanuel I. The Genoese, however, resented fiercely being

subject to a Piedmontese ruler, and this resentment found its expression in the mouth of a lawyer of Genoa named Mazzini. The personality of Mazzini was strange and complex ; although a convinced enemy of the Church he was a mystic and a dreamer. He was not merely passionately absorbed in the idea of a united Italy, he was also obsessed by the idea of a republican Italy. He would not fight for unity if that unity were still to be under the rule of a sovereign. He founded the secret society known as Young Italy and later another of much wider scope called Young Europe, the objective of which was to deliver all the nations from monarchy and establish republics.

Felice Orsini was one of his disciples—a disciple who outran his master. Young Europe, of which Young Italy became a branch, having accomplished nothing but a series of unsuccessful plots, assassinations, and abortive outbreaks, died a natural death but left a legacy of anarchical centres.

Mazzini's was by no means the only party which worked for united Italy. Pio Nono himself was known as the Liberal Pope and the Grand Dukes of Parma and Medina and the King of Sardinia acknowledged the national movement as against the Austrians and Jesuits. All over Italy there were little revolutions, riots, mobs ; and the internal disorders were such that patriots who hoped for a united Italy would find themselves fighting against each other for some quite different reason.

The Pope found that he could not continue on the Liberal path without, by inevitable logic, losing what he stood for; the Republican party advanced against him and the Pope fled to the kingdom of Naples. The Liberals formed a provisional Government which was placed in the hands of a triumvirate headed by Mazzini. True to his principles, Mazzini called on the Italians to elect deputies to a General Constituent Assembly, and he went further and caused a republic to be proclaimed. Orsini was one of those invited to attend the Assembly. Meanwhile the Liberal monarchists of Lombardy decided to fuse with the kingdom of Sardinia sooner than consent to a republic, and Northern Italy became united in a single kingdom. This again was overthrown by Austria, which reconquered Lombardy and Venice. Italy found itself in a worse state than before the revolution, with Medina and Parma occupied by Austria and Tuscany also beneath its sway. It was at this moment that France, in spite of the opinions which Louis Napoléon had always professed, joined with Spain, Austria, and the kingdom of Naples to restore the power of the Pope in Rome and put an end to the Republic. It was the French expedition which carried out the actual subjugation of Rome.

The Italian revolution of 1848—that revolution which Orsini and his kind hoped would mean the end of the Austrian dominion—had left the unhappy country in a worse position than that in which it had been found.

When, during his speech for the defence, Maitre Jules Favre came to the part which Lamartine, the poet politician, had played in the drama of Orsini's soul, he pointed out that by his famous manifesto in 1848, Lamartine publicly declared himself the friend of Italy, so much so, that the United Italy Party hailed the dawn of their independence. And Favre made the justifiable point that though France had chosen to change her mind, Orsini had remained true to his old allegiance. Speaking of the Constitutional Assembly, to which Orsini had been summoned, Favre declared : " Europe trampled it under foot and the cannon of France crushed it."

Lamartine, the flamboyant and pathetically sincere figure which shines out above all others in the French Revolution of February 1848, had been indeed the incarnation of the hope of the Italian independents. Under the Provisional Government Lamartine had received the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but he was unable to live up to the position which he had obtained. He was the possessor of such a rich eloquence that the comparative paucity of his ideas for long passed unnoticed, and when the Provisional Government failed to placate the mob, it was Lamartine's eloquence that tamed and charmed it to quietude. But there is a limit to what even a mob will accept and the time came when, having gone home and thought over, away from the spell of Lamartine's golden tongue, the things that that tongue had declared,

the French mob came to the conclusion that they were being cheated. A citizen monarch is a hybrid of no use to such a logical country as France, and Louis Philippe had to make way for Louis Napoléon.

This third Napoléon, who, to all intents and purposes was the second Napoléon—for the unfortunate little King of Rome cannot be said to count as a figure in history—did not waste his years of exile. He had not neglected the simple and obvious methods by which it was possible to keep himself in the eye of the public, such as, when living on a lavish scale in London, using the Imperial eagle on his coach and being always attended by equerries. His early book " A Manual of Artillery " had received serious commendation, and his more popular " Idées Napoléonnes " served to keep alive in the public consciousness those sentiments of " glory " which had obtained under the first Empire. Prince Louis Napoléon may have been only a drawing-room lion, but his roar could be heard from Carlton House Terrace to the Tuileries. When Louis Phillipe abdicated and the July monarchy came to an end, the King and Queen fled to that refuge of destitute royalty, England, and France fell into a state of wild confusion. In this confusion it is the figure of Lamartine that towers above the others, but it was that very confusion which was to test him too high and prove him to be rather a genius of the emotions than of the intellect. But there was one point upon which Lamartine stood firm. When

the mob of 40,000 people called for the abolition of the tricolor flag and its replacement by the red flag of anarchy, Lamartine steadily refused the demand. " I will reject, even to death, this banner of blood," he declared. " This red flag you offer us has made the circuit of the Champ de Mars through the people's blood in 1791 and 1793, while the tricolor has made the circuit of the world with the name of glory and the liberty of our country."

Chaos reigned everywhere and the days of the Terror seemed to be revived, and when Louis Napoléon arrived in Paris on the 27th of February it seemed at first that he only made confusion worse confounded. The Provisional Government had no use for him and asked him to leave, and with the true Bonaparte touch, combining adroit sentiment with bombast, Louis Napoléon made a superb answer, and withdrew. " I thought," he retorted " that after thirty-three years of exile and persecution, I had at length the right to find a home in my native land. You think my presence in Paris at this time would be an embarrassment, I therefore retire for the moment. You will see in this sacrifice the purity both of my intentions and of my patriotism." The Prince thereupon withdrew to London, having made himself felt and feared in the eyes of all men, and anarchy continued to reign in France. Eventually the elections were held, the Socialists were beaten and, of the eight hundred and forty members of the new Assembly, though the majority were for the Government,

there were also one hundred and thirty Legitimatists and one hundred ex-Royalists. When the National Assembly met it accepted the resignation of the Provisional Government and appointed a Commission of Five, which included Lamartine to carry on. But a further insurrection took place and the Chamber was dissolved. In June supplementary elections were held and Prince Louis Napoléon was returned by popular vote. Out of twenty-three departments, four had elected him to be their representative.

Lamartine, fearful of what he foresaw would be the re-establishment of the Empire, gave orders for Louis Napoléon's arrest, and once more the Prince made the *beau geste* of withdrawal. " My name," he wrote, not without dignity, " is the symbol of order, of nationality and of glory, and it would be a great grief to me to see it used to increase the troubles which are rending our country. To avoid such a misfortune I would be ready to remain an exile."

Meanwhile labour disorders were growing more and more dangerous and insistent and culminated in the bloodiest fighting that even Paris had ever seen. All through Europe, as though a fuze had been lit, the fires of revolution broke out. Orsini was fighting and intriguing with Mazzini in Italy at the same time that Lamartine was struggling for his ideal in France and that Louis Napoléon was watching his opportunity to enter into what he considered his inheritance. Austria, Hungary, Prussia, Denmark and Russia were all affected by the spirit

of unrest in the air. England suffered—or was purged, according to the point of view—by the Chartist riots. The world was in a ferment, and men like Orsini were the natural outcome of such a time.

By October 1848, Louis Napoléon had again been elected in five out of seventeen vacant Departments, and on the 26th of September he had taken his seat in the Chamber. The eyes of Europe were once more fixed upon a Napoléon, the laws of exile which, until this, had held good against the Bonapartes were repealed and Louis Napoléon was once more in his own country by right and not as a proscribed adventurer. France had decided upon a republic and amongst the candidates were Louis Napoléon and Lamartine. The latter's fame had suffered too much during the period of disorder since the end of the July monarchy ; and Louis Napoléon, who had, perhaps on the face of it, fewer advantages than any of the other candidates, rode to triumph on the crest of the popular wave. The magic of the great name had held good.

From this moment Lamartine, who had stood for the republican ideals that Orsini and Mazzini had fought for, declined in power, and Louis Napoléon, the Prince President, held the future, not only of France, but of distressed and divided Italy, in his hands. In spite of the passionate opposition of such men as Victor Hugo, there is no doubt that at first Louis Napoléon not only meant well, but did well. His love for France was deep, tender and sincere,

his conviction in his own star as fixed as that of the Great Napoléon's had been, but, unfortunately, this lesser Napoléon had not the ability to force his star to keep to its set course as his uncle had for so long succeeded in doing.

At first Louis Napoléon's rule was beneficial to France and not only beneficial but amazingly brilliant. Over the vexed question of Italy he maintained, as had been seen, his attitude of irresolution, being torn both ways—towards the ideals of united Italy by his own convictions and his past actions and towards the papacy and Austria by the French Catholics and the Empress. For over ten years the vacillations of Napoléon's mind continued and it was the action of Orsini that finally determined the Emperor, as he had now become, to take an active part in Italian affairs. The teachings of Mazzini, the hopes inspired by and lost with Lamartine, had combined to urge Orsini towards the crime which was, after all, by a more round-about manner than he had dreamed of, to win freedom for Italy.

Felice Orsini was the son of a patriotic, not to say fire-eating, father. Orsini père had taken part in the first French revolution, had been a captain in Napoléon's army and gone through the Russian campaign. But, like so many others, Captain Orsini made the discovery that the Empire of Napoléon, that Empire which had seemed at one time to bring unity and prosperity to Italy, was founded, not upon an idea, but upon force—and by force it fell.

Nevertheless, though upon the destruction of his dream the dreamer sheathed his sword, he yet continued to brood over the idea which seemed for the moment to have been lost, and, becoming a conspirator, fought in the complicated brawls that were rending Italy and eventually died upon the battlefield with the name of Napoléon the Great upon his lips. It will be seen that all Felice's impressionable years of childhood and young manhood had been passed in the atmosphere of anarchy. His advocate, Jules Favre, made great play in his speech with Orsini's upbringing, and rightly so. From his earliest youth the young Felice had been imbued with one idea—the liberating of Italy, and he was taught that, for this end, all means were justifiable. The Procureur of the Republic, the well-known Chaix d'Est Ange, drew attention to a curious point in the mentality of fanatics when he said of Orsini : " He was condemned in 1845 for a plot, and was amnestied in 1846. Before availing himself of the amnesty he took an oath, the form of which you may wish to know ; it is this—' I swear on my honour that I will not abuse the pardon which is now accorded to me, and I will fulfil the duties of a good and loyal subject.' Perhaps Orsini does not consider himself bound by his oath. He thinks probably that the end justifies the means ; like a well-known sect, he perhaps has no objection to mental reservation."

There is an account of Orsini, written by an exiled " patriot," which fulfils the part of special

pleader more whole-heartedly than Favre, who had to proclaim his horror of his client's deed, was able to do. This anonymous writer and old companion of Orsini's declares that Italians should always honour his memory " in spite of the blood with which it was stained." At the age of eighteen Orsini had already been written down by the police as a danger to society, but this ardent advocate speaks of the " persecution by the police of the young patriot," describes how he " risked his head " to become affiliated with Mazzini's society, Young Italy, at the age of nineteen, and how in 1843 when he was twenty-four he fought side by side with his father at Bologna, the last of those to resist the Swiss soldiers of the Pope. Orsini, betrayed and denounced, was given up to the Austrians with his father and was condemned to the galleys for life, as our writer has it, in a sentence breathing dramatic fire : " The ' patriot ' had been made a convict, his companion in chains was his own father. What crime had they committed ? They had revolted against the intolerable oppression of Pope Gregory XVI. who is in league with a foreign power to crush Italy. . . . For two years this father and son bore the shameful livery of the convict and were forced to mingle with the lowest of criminals."

They lived without hope, for Gregory XVI. was implacable, but at length the Pope died and Pius IX. succeeded him and inaugurated his reign by liberal reforms and by an amnesty. Orsini and his father were amongst those who

were liberated and both signed their allegiance to the Roman Government. Later on, Orsini was reproached with having violated the word he had given on this occasion, but he replied that he had only given his word to a pontiff in exchange for Italian liberty and a constitution, and that the Pope having been the first to go back on his promise, patriots could consider themselves absolved from theirs. . . . Orsini once again risked his life and his liberty . . . he was once again arrested and threatened with death and finally released for lack of evidence.

It was then the eve of the great events of 1848. Italy arose, Venice and Milan drove out the Austrians and Orsini was one of the heroes of their deliverance. Made a member of the National Assembly at Rome in 1849 he offered himself to effect an apparently impossible task, that of suppressing brigandage in the Roman states, for bands of men in the grip of reaction were putting whole provinces to fire and sword. Orsini did not hesitate. At the head of the revolutionary forces he stamped out brigandage and delivered Central Italy, after having miraculously escaped attempts on his life both by bullets and by poison.

After the failure of Italy's first attempt for freedom, Orsini became one of the most devoted secret agents of Mazzini. He fermented conspiracies, went on dangerous missions, stirred up the people when they seemed to be succumbing inertly to their fate, or in the words of our

anarchist author : " He waked the people out of the lethargy which enfolded them, he excited their spirit and breathed into them the breath of his own patriotism."

In 1854, Mazzini charged Orsini with a mission in Lombardy and Venice which had for its object the getting together of Italian and Hungarian patriots so that both of these oppressed peoples should rise against Austria. After many months of secret work on this account, Orsini was again arrested and thrown into prison. Orsini made a wonderful escape from his prison, cutting through eight bars of iron and letting himself out on a fragile rope which broke and let him fall a distance of 40 metres. The same writer gives a vivid account of how this escape was effected which, in spite of the florid language in which it is couched, must have been true in its main essentials as they were corroborated by the speech of Maître Favre. Our admiring author writes as follows :

" One day the turn-key asked him if he would like to communicate with the outside world. ' There is,' said he, ' a lady, not the one of whom you have spoken to me, but I think, sent by this noble lady. She has applied to the director to get permission for you to receive food from outside, and, in view of your good conduct, to which we will all bear witness, that your food may be improved, you may receive the permission which is sometimes granted to receive dishes from outside.'

" Orsini realised the truth. He had aroused a passionate attachment in the heart of a great lady.

" The Governor of the prison and the turn-keys all

believed that this person was instructed to assist the prisoner by the noble Austrian lady of whom he had spoken so often, but who only existed in his imagination.

" Orsini realised that this mistake might be his salvation. With great cleverness, the young woman who loved him realised that the means of his deliverance must be a metal file.

" One day, in a cake he found rolled in a thin sheet of copper, a steel spring. He unrolled it and found that the fine blade of the steel had been made into a saw. He began work at once but found unexpected difficulties to overcome. He found that, by standing on the seat of his chair he could touch the bars of his window but could not see them. It was impossible to work under these conditions.

" He was obliged to raise himself up with his left hand and to use the saw with the right and to hold himself thus for very short periods which were of necessity interrupted by exhaustion. It can be imagined what strength of will he must have exerted to bring this undertaking to a successful close.

" Nevertheless, with a marvellous agility, with a patience which extended over several months, he finally succeeded in cutting through the bars one by one. He hid all marks made by the saw by means of burnt bread crumbs mixed with rust. But although the bars were cut, this did not mean that he was at liberty, he had still to overcome the precipice and the open window was nothing more than a gaping abyss.

" A rope was necessary, and Orsini could only obtain this by means of his sheets.

" He pretended to be ill and remained in bed on the day on which it was customary to change the prisoners' linen.

" When the guard came with his parcel of linen, Orsini begged him to leave it on the bench, saying that he would give up his dirty sheets the next day.

" The guards were changed every day, and the following day Orsini hid his dirty linen and he was never asked to give it up.

" He thus found himself in possession of a pair of sheets which he cut in pieces and plaited, thus making a fairly strong rope of great length.

" At last, on March 29th, 1855, everything was ready; he fastened the rope to one of the stumps of the bars, and, taking one or two oranges which he had obtained to quench his thirst should he be wounded, he began his descent on a dark and rainy night.

" He had already covered more than 20 metres by supporting his feet against the wall, and could see the water of the ditch below him and feel the damp air rising from it, when suddenly his strength failed him and, exhausted with fatigue, he fell a long distance, hitting the stonework at the edge of the moat heavily as he did so. He was badly wounded in the knees and found it impossible to stand. His determination was unshaken and with indomitable energy, pulling himself along by means of bushes and grasses, he succeeded in crawling for more than three kilometres and hiding himself in the country, among some brambles. It was here that he was discovered, frozen, exhausted, almost dying, by some hunters the following day.

" He told them of his adventures, and his courage filled them with such admiration that they helped him to proceed and made it possible for him to find an impenetrable hiding-place with certain political friends of theirs."

There can be no doubt that, however misjudged and criminal were the last resorts to which Orsini's conviction pushed him, that he was a man of indomitable courage and perseverance. After his escape he went to England, where he lectured in public and told the story of his life and had something of a popular success. The

fact that he talked publicly and over many months on the subject of his own career is the strongest link that binds Orsini to the criminal world. He might have thrown a bomb and still have been an occasional and not a congenital criminal, but a distorted egoism, a sort of vanity even in ill-doing, is the hall-mark of the congenital criminal, the one trait which, without any exception, as far as the present author is aware, they will all be found to have in common. The wordy exile will have it that : " Orsini was not one of those narrow-minded fanatics who arm themselves against authority in the name of a political system ; he was an ardent soul, a warm and generous heart inspired by patriotism to devote himself to his country." But this has always been the language in which anarchy has justified itself.

Ten years had now gone by since the events of 1848, when Orsini could still have laid claim to the title of patriot unstained by any baser admingling of ideas, and 1858 found him in England, an exile, brooding over his wrongs and those of his country. He gradually convinced himself that Napoléon III. was the human being most to blame for Italy's continued enslavement. Orsini considered—and not without truth, that Napoléon had betrayed Italy by failing to live up to the promises he had always made on her behalf, the oath which he had sworn in his youth when he had vowed himself to work for the independence of Italy. Orsini determined to kill him for having failed to keep this oath. He

set himself, in England, to get together associates and weapons towards this end. The fact that under the protection of the laws of England it had been possible to perfect this plot, made much bad feeling in France. Orsini's confederates were of a less good class than himself, and at the trial, when all the accused were dressed in black, thus ensuring a superficial alikeness, Orsini's personality stood out. Pieri, indeed, had actually been condemned twice as a thief, once for stealing an umbrella and once for stealing a watch. It is amusing to note that although he admitted his guilt in connection with the watch he denied with " extraordinary energy " that of the umbrella—evidently to be accused of such a small peccadillo hurt his vanity.

The police of London had notified the police of Paris of the departure of Orsini and his three companions, and the Paris authorities were severely blamed afterwards for not having shadowed the four anarchists from the moment of their landing in France. However, Pieri was arrested just before the commission of the crime, having been recognised by a police officer as he was hanging about in the Rue Lepelletier. On his person was found a fulminating shell and a five-barrelled revolver fully loaded, a Bank of England note for twenty pounds, and three hundred and seventy-five francs in French money. Another shell similar to that found on Pieri was picked up later at the corner of the Rue Lepelletier and the Rue Rossini, beside a track of blood about seven feet in length.

After the first horror and confusion of the crime had passed, the police instituted a minute search in the houses of the Rue Lepelletier and discovered in Broggi's restaurant, opposite the Opéra, a young man, apparently a foreigner, who had taken refuge there. Broggi's was a famous Italian restaurant patronised by writers and singers. The tenor, Mario, had once been a frequenter of the place, which, from having been a simple café, had developed into a sort of club, half political, half literary. The young man now caught there gave his name as Swiney and said that he was an Englishman's servant. He appeared to be in great distress and was discovered to have hidden a five-barrelled revolver under a cushion at the restaurant. The police went on to an hotel in the Rue Montmartre, where Pieri had told them he lodged, and there was found in bed, though half-dressed, a man who gave his name as Silva. Silva possessed a Portuguese passport, and Pieri possessed a German passport issued in Prussia in the name of Joseph Andreas Piercy, but on examination it was found that the name Pieri had been altered to that of Piercy. The hotel people told the police that Pieri had arrived there in company with a man called Swiney, though Swiney had since left and Silva had taken his place.

Directly they heard the name Swiney, which had been given by the young man in the restaurant, the police were sure they were on the right track. Swiney, who had been asked where he lived, gave the name of an hotel in

the Rue St. Honoré. The police went there and found a girl waiting for him in his bed. She was arrested and afterwards released as nothing was found against her. In this room was found a passport bearing the name of Peter Byron Swiney, issued in London for Paris. The proprietors of the hotel in the Rue St. Honoré told the police that Swiney had been brought to them by the concierge of a house in the Rue Monthabor. He had stated that Swiney was the servant of a gentleman lodging in that house. Swiney was now asked his master's name, and gave it as Allsop.

The police went to the house in question and found Allsop in bed, wounded in the head, though not seriously, and bleeding profusely. Allsop stated that he was an Englishman and was in the brewery trade. His passport was made out in the name of Thomas Allsop, and he had visiting cards engraved with the same name. Four men were now under arrest on suspicion of being concerned in the affair, and these men had given their names, the first correctly, as Pieri, Allsop, Swiney and Silva. Swiney turned out to be Gomez, Silva to be Charles de Rudio, and Allsop was Felice Orsini. Between them the four men had considerable sums of money, fulminating shells and revolvers, The police soon had complete dossiers of all four prisoners.

Orsini's career sounded less well when coldly and judicially related than when written by an enthusiastic admirer. Pieri, in addition to having

been a convicted thief, had treated his wife so badly that she was forced to leave him. Gomez, who had served in Algiers in the Foreign Legion, had been imprisoned for fraud, and had afterwards taken refuge in England. Gomez is described as looking like the menial he had described himself as being—a little man of no particular distinction. De Rudio, who appears to have belonged to a good family which had come down in the world, was thin and starved looking. Neither he nor Gomez denied their connection with Orsini and Pieri. Orsini was described as being of middle stature, full in face and body, with finer bearing than that of his companions, which seemed to put him in a class by himself. He had dark burning eyes and flowing hair and whiskers, and conducted himself in court with calmness and without bravado. Gomez had made full confession of the crime although, like most criminals, he occasionally retracted and contradicted himself. Rudio also confessed and adhered to his first statement. He declared that he had been starving as a professor of languages in England when he met Bernard, an anarchist from the South of France who had been also residing in London and who recommended him for employment. De Rudio declared that Pieri promised him three hundred and thirty-six francs and a few shillings a week for his wife if he would follow him to Paris and there do what he was told. When the extent to which his obedience was required was unfolded to him in Paris, de Rudio,

according to his own account, thought the matter too serious, but he felt in honour bound to go through with the undertaking. Pieri only admitted that his journey to Paris had been taken with a view towards the revolutionary movement, and he denied that it was he, as had been stated in the indictment, who had bought the pistols found in Paris, declaring Orsini to have been the purchaser. Orsini flatly contradicted this statement and, since Orsini had nothing to lose or gain, it is the more likely that he spoke the truth on this point. The court was crowded each day of the trial, and tickets were issued as for admission to a theatre. After the examination of Gomez and de Rudio, Orsini was interrogated and calmly and quietly gave what was not a confession but an explanation :

" I have long endeavoured to effect the independence of my country, and this idea has occupied my mind without any feeling of hatred against France being mixed up with it. All my hatred was against the Austrians who, since 1815, have never ceased to persecute and plunder us. I have never ceased to struggle against Austrian domination, and this is the only crime of which I have been guilty. In 1848 I hoped, with all Italy, that the end of Austrian domination had arrived. A Constituent Assembly having been convoked at Rome, I was elected to form part of it. There, seeing a French army landed, we thought it came as a friend, but when we saw it came as an enemy we were painfully astonished. An engagement having placed a certain number of French soldiers in our hands, we took advantage of an armistice, which the French General accorded us, to restore him his prisoners. This surrender took place at the advanced posts to the cry of ' Vive la

France ! ' ' Vive l'Italie ! ' At a later period everyone knows how the engagements, the promises, and the armistice were kept. But in spite of that, the political men who then directed the affairs at Rome did not cease to show attachment towards France, so persuaded were we all that the war was an act of the Government and not of the nation."

Later on Orsini declared :

" I will not now detail the reasons which convinced me that the Emperor has an interest diametrically opposed to the independence of Italy. Once convinced that this was the great stumbling-block to our independence, I confess, I resolved to kill him. I should have preferred executing this design alone, but close access to the Emperor was not easy, and I was, therefore, obliged to seek associates. After having approved my plans and given their consent and assistance, these men abandon me to-day, and it is their testimony which has led to my capture by you. I will not show reprisals. I will not recriminate on them. I pardon them, and I offer my head as a sacrifice to my country. Before my judges, I will only occupy myself with one thing—my character. Let me not be judged by the declarations of these men . . ."

Here again we see the touch of the vanity of the criminal. The eloquence of Maître Favre could not, of course, have secured Orsini's acquittal, as he was not only proved, but self-confessed, to have been guilty, but the picture which the advocate drew of Orsini's youth and the sacrifice of his father's life and of his indomitable courage, moved the assembly so much that several minutes elapsed before the court was collected enough to go on with the

business in hand. Since all four prisoners were found guilty on the count of attempting to assassinate the Emperor, it was not found necessary to proceed with the other accusations, which only at "Fourthly" arrived at the accusations of having murdered the eight unfortunate victims who had lost their lives. Extenuating circumstances were granted by the court to Gomez, as having acted under orders. He was condemned to hard labour for life. Orsini, Pieri and de Rudio were condemned to die the death of parricides on the principle that the Emperor was the father of his people. This brings into the case a touch of the bizarre which makes it extremely vivid. The punishment for parricides in France consists of being led to the guillotine with a black veil over the face, a long white sheet over the clothes and with naked feet, and being thus exposed in this strange and awful motley to the gaze of the people while an officer reads the sentence of the court.

From the prison of Mazas Orsini wrote that letter to Napoléon III. which affected the Emperor so profoundly. The letter ran as follows :

"To Napoléon III., Emperor of the French.

"The depositions which I have made against myself in the course of the political proceedings which have been instituted on the occasion of the attempt of the 14th of January, are sufficient to send me to the scaffold, and I shall submit to my fate without asking for pardon, both because I will not humiliate myself before him who has destroyed in the bud the liberty of my unhappy

country, and because, in the situation in which I am now placed, death for me will be a relief.

" Being near the close of my career, I wish, however, to make a last effort to assist Italy, whose independence has hitherto made me pass through so many perils and submit to every sacrifice. She is the constant object of all my affections, and it is the idea which I wish to set forth in the words which I address to your Majesty.

" In order to maintain the balance of power in Europe it is necessary to render Italy independent, or to tighten the chains by which Austria holds her in bondage. Shall I ask that for her deliverance the blood of Frenchmen shall be shed for the Italians ? No, I do not go so far as that. Italy asks that France will not intervene against her, and that France shall not allow Germany to support Austria in the struggles in which she might soon be engaged. This is precisely what your Majesty can do, if you are so inclined ; on your will, therefore, depends the welfare or the misfortune of my country—the life or death of a nation to which Europe is in a great measure indebted for her civilisation.

" Such is the prayer which from my cell I dare to address to your Majesty, not despairing but that my feeble voice may be heard ; I beseech your Majesty to restore to Italy the independence which her children lost in 1849 through the very fault of the French. Let your Majesty call to mind that the Italians, among whom was my father, joyfully shed their blood for Napoléon the Great, wherever he pleased to lead them ; that they were faithful to him until his fall ; and that, so long as Italy is not independent, the tranquillity of Europe and that of your Majesty will always be illusions.

" May your Majesty not reject the last prayer of a patriot on the steps of the scaffold ! May you deliver my country, and the blessings of 25,000,000 citizens will follow you to posterity ! "

" Prison of Mazas, *February 11th.* Felice Orsini."

Perhaps when Napoléon III. read this letter it brought up vividly before him the old days when, as young Louis Napoléon, he had fought in Italy for the cause which he had since abandoned. The very word Italy was necessarily of profound significance to one of his family, raising, as it did, so many memories of great battles and "military glory," that awful tyrant under whose banner Europe has for so long marched on bloody feet. Napoléon III. invited Cavour to a personal interview, the result of which was that Napoléon promised to free the region of Lombardy and Venice to the borders of the Adriatic, receiving on his side Nice and Savoy. He furthered strengthened the bonds between France and Piedmont by a marriage between the son of the former King Jerome, his own first cousin, and the Princess Clothilde, daughter of Victor Emmanuel, King of Piedmont and Sardinia. Austria at last sent an ultimatum to Turin that, backed up by Napoléon's promises, Cavour rejected; and Europe was once more plunged into war with a Napoléon leading in the field.

The war was short, showy and brilliant; but eventually that for which Orsini had struggled all his life was an accomplished fact—Italy had become, in the words of her Sovereign, "not the Italy of the Romans nor that of the Middle Ages, but the Italy of the Italians."

The Second Empire stood at its topmost pinnacle of brilliance and success. She appeared as solidly prosperous as she was dazzlingly

successful, she had placed Italy on the way to complete freedom, she had made herself feared as in the days of the Great Napoléon, as the most important military power in Europe ; but whereas Italy was to progress towards a more and more sound and true nationality, France was to decline with an appalling swiftness towards the tragedy of 1870.

Orsini was in his grave when Napoléon III. made the move towards assisting the Piedmontese, but it was Orsini's action and Orsini's letter which had been the mainspring of that movement.

In prison Orsini displayed as much calmness as during the trial, though it was thought prudent to keep him and Pieri and de Rudio in straight waistcoats, which seems to us in these days a brutal piece of preventive punishment. Between the date of the conviction, Friday the 26th of February, and the date of the execution, Saturday, 13th March, rumours were always arising to the effect that Orsini and his confederates were to be respited, and, indeed, Napoléon himself felt no personal vindictiveness in the matter, but had acted throughout with a fairness amounting to generosity towards the prisoners. The rumours, however, were ill-founded ; too many innocent victims had been killed or disabled for the chief authors of the crime to escape the extreme penalty, and only de Rudio's sentence was commuted to penal servitude.

The execution of Orsini and Pieri had been originally fixed for the 12th March, but as the

Thursday happened to be Mi-Carême, it was felt that two men should not die on a scaffold set in streets where revellers in fancy dress were careering up and down, and that the blare of trumpets and horns would accord ill with the death knell of the prison chapel. Therefore, as the carnival could not be postponed, the execution was delayed until the Saturday. The prisoners had been removed to the condemned prison in the Place de la Roquette. It is a grim quarter of Paris which might well be called a field of blood, so many of the victims of revolutions and so many criminals have died there. The upper part of la Roquette is, as it were, dedicated to the shops of undertakers. Tombs, coffins, horrible arrangements of artificial flowers, stretch away in a sort of nightmare of funeral furnishings. The two prisons, the cemetery and the Bastille do nothing to enliven the effect of the Rue de la Roquette, which runs from the Place de la Bastille to close by Père la Chaise.

The morning of the 13th March dawned bitterly cold. It had been snowing, and the sinister street and the Place de la Roquette were so wet that they could have reflected as in a mirror the flickering street lamps, but the approaches to the Place and the Place itself were covered with a dense mass of people, heaving to and fro like some horrible dark tide that had welled up between the house walls. The sky was covered with dark slate-coloured clouds, and grey mist drifted low around the houses, like a fog. In front of the gate of the prison the

scaffold was erected, and on it stood the guillotine, stark and uncompromising, the hole for the head gaping like an open mouth in its lower part ; while above, the triangular blade showed as a thin dark wedge in its red-painted framework, the only note of colour that declared itself in the uncertain light. At five o'clock, to the sound of bugles and drums, squadrons of cavalry advanced, their blue and white cloaks glimmering palely through the damp mist. At six o'clock Orsini and Pieri were informed by the Governor of the prison that the hour had arrived.

The two men were marked by the same difference that had divided them at the trial. Orsini was dignified, Pieri the reverse. During the toilet of the execution, when the condemned were being pinioned and their hair was being cut from the back of the neck, Pieri talked excitedly and even laughed and joked about the figure he presented with the parricide's hood and veil placed upon him. He called out gaily to Orsini and asked him how he was getting on, but Orsini replied coldly and quietly, " Be calm, my friend, be calm ! " Pieri, however, could not be calm and continued to talk as the assistant took off his foot-gear, and when the moment of departure had arrived and the Abbé said to him " Courage ! " he called out : " Oh ! I am not afraid ! I am not afraid ! We are going to Calvary ! " and repeated to himself over and over again, " To Calvary—to Calvary ! " Orsini remained perfectly calm and tranquil and bade

the Governor of the prison and some of the officials farewell. Pieri had flinched when he felt the cold blade of the scissors against the back of his neck; Orsini made no movement at the same sinister moment. Only when the ridiculous hood was put on his head, his face, just before the veil fell over it, was seen to have flushed up. Orsini declined any food or drink, Pieri gulped down strong coffee and spirits. Pieri went to the scaffold singing a well-known song—" Mourir pour la patrie." Orsini remained calm and unmoved till the end, and this absence of bravado invested him with a dignity of which his costume could not quite deprive him.

When he appeared on the scaffold it was seen from the movement of his body and head under the veil that he was trying to look towards the crowd as though he wished to speak to them, but they were too far off, being separated from him by two battalions of infantry and various squadrons of horse. Pieri was executed first, crying " Vive l'Italie ! " and it was then the turn of Orsini. His veil was raised and his pale full countenance still betrayed no emotion of any kind. He was fastened to the plank, and a moment later his head fell into the basket. For a moment there was deep silence, then the crowd began to disperse, each man and woman beginning to struggle towards breakfast or towards work. Every moment the morning was becoming clearer as the mists dispersed. The guillotine was taken to bits and removed, and

presently only a few groups of people still lingered as though the spot had for them a morbid fascination, but the cold became more intense, the snow began to fall again and in a few hours the Place de la Roquette was white and empty.

Orsini apparently never expressed any sorrow for all the deaths, which eventually amounted to fourteen, for which he had been responsible and yet, in spite of this cold-blooded callousness there is something about the man that inspires respect. He did not use, as so many other so-called anarchists have done, his political opinions as a mask for a life of private and advantageous crime, he was as hard and ruthless to himself as he had been to others; and though he was a particularly callous murderer, in that he thought nothing of condemning to death many innocent people along with the one man whom he tried to kill and failed, yet there is no doubt that in his passionate and fanatical mind he was justified to himself. That was precisely what made him such a danger to society and, consequently, a worse criminal from the point of view of the community than the ordinary criminal actuated by love of gain. The measure of a criminal's responsibility is the measure of his guilt, but it is not the measure of his harmfulness. An honest conviction, when wrongly applied, is a far greater danger to mankind than the obvious wickedness that actuates the ordinary murderer. For he only kills the body—but the murderer of conviction may kill many souls.

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